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REALIZING THE INCARNATION

Edited by

Samuel Rayan

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Realizing the Incarnation

Edited by

Samuel Rayan

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Editorial

In the Easter Mass of the roman tradition the first reading is followed by a song, a 'sequence'. The song says that Death and Life clashed and contended. In the combat Life's Leader dies only to come alive and reign immortal.

The great struggle in our days has been between capitalism and socialism. Which of these is Death and which is Life depends on your analysis of reality; on your understanding of life and history and the earth; on the value system you cherish and the options you make; and on your view of what it means to be human. Jesus took the side of life. He struggled against disease, hunger, outcastness and other minions of death. He came with an offer of abounding life, and presented himself as the life, the way to true life and the resurrection. He fought Mammon, wealth-accumulation in a few hands which left the people poor, needy and anxious. The economy was a major concern of Jesus.

Today many believe that in the cold war capitalism has won, and there is little or no likelihood of socialism's resurrection. The victory is being bruited and celebrated with fanfare. Robert Heilbroner wrote: "the contest between capitalism and socialism is over: capitalism has won" ("The Triumph of Capitalism", *The New Yorker*, January 23, 1989, p. 98). Francis Fukuyama of the U. S. State Department suggested that "we may in fact be witnessing ... the end point of mankind's ideological evolution ... the end of history". ("The End of History? As Our Mad Century Closes, We Find the Universal State", *Washington Post*, July 30, 1989). The exultation of the capitalist west is echoed by the elite they have educated in their former colonies. Coca-Cola has come. Kentucky fried chicken will come. The end of history. US Multinationals are taking over our land and natural resources; they are 'discovering' us again. Their 'Patent' flags are being hoisted, and claims made. The IMF, the WB and the GATT/WTO are guiding our economy and telling us what we may think, make, eat, say, do. The end of history indeed!

But there are dissenting voices and dissonant notes. There are some, perhaps many, who refuse to sing to capitalism's victory or to dance to its tune. A fair number of social scientists, religious thinkers, economists, humanists and especially the mass of the people seem to be hearing a different drum, having an alternative vision, and moving within a horizon of meaning wholly other than that of capitalism. They detect in the end-of-history talk an invitation to despair. For the world which capitalism has so far forged for us is a miserable thing. The broth it has boiled for us is bitter and deadly. If the universe of capitalist achievement and capitalist promise that is before us is the ultimate that we can create, and capitalism is the highest form of thought and social organization, human hope may well die, for the thing is scarcely worth mentioning and life is hardly worth pursuing. The growing violence, the mounting rate of suicide, the deepening loneliness and the seeping sense of meaninglessness are in the very fabric of capitalism. A fresh crop of criticism of capitalism remains to be harvested.

The following pages are an attempt to listen to some critical voices, and to consider new dreams of our common future. With all those who are concerned, with those who reject exploitation and manipulation, with everyone for whom people matter, we wish to raise questions. Is capitalism the only way of organising the economy? Are its production relations the only ones possible and practicable? Are there really no alternatives?

Need India's economy be subservient to the economy of Europe and the USA? Need it be forced to function as a tributary flowing into and feeding the West's economic rivers, and helping them to swell and spread and submerge our life and our distinct possibilities? Could not, should not, our economy have a story of its own, a face and voice of its own, and grow out of its own cultural history, spiritual perceptions and considered needs?

Is there need for us, or for any self-respecting people however small or weak, to submit meekly to the pressures and arrogance of mighty money-lenders with whose manners and mores and greed and grab, no poor village is unfamiliar?

Should we have our needs and goals, our meanings and morals defined for us by others whose colonial yoke we overthrew but yesterday, or by their new, subtle tools of global domination: the

International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and General Agreement on Trade and Tariff which has now become World Trade Organization? Should we not rather define our needs and meanings for ourselves, and pursue them along paths that we agree among us to be conducive to ever greater refining and enriching of our humanity and our relationships, and the quality of life everywhere?

Is it right for us to ape every western way, to make our own all the rich west's appetites and consumerist cravings and wasteful practices which are also debasing, infantile, inane, irrational, insane, and heartless? Shall we not instead choose paths of peace, frugality and sanity, of gentle relationships, warm friendships and joyful sharing of the earth and its resources, and of time as well as of cultural creations?

Shall we not take our place in the cosmic web of life, and weave a culture of fellowship and community instead of succumbing to western individualism, insatiable greed, meaningless competition, accumulation of wants and goods, ending finally in human shallowness and spiritual emptiness?

Do we need to bend our knees before the west's sensational technological magic forgetting its wasteful, destructive, polluting, anti-life character? and overlook miserably the richly human wisdom, experience and insights of our own peasants, artisans, women, villagers and tribes?

Need we despise and neglect the many traditional systems of health care and healing known to the masses of the people in favour of the one colonially induced medical system which was economically and culturally and hence also politically beneficial to imperial powers? As there is today a revival of our ancient health systems, could there not be a substantial resurrecting of the more communitarian economy of pre-colonial times?

Questions could be multiplied. They challenge us to explore ancient and local wisdom, to discover and reconstruct alternative economies which are less wasteful, less polluting, more gentle and life-promoting, better rooted in the life and culture of the people, more open to people's participation and hence more effective. The challenge is to work out ways of feeding, clothing, and housing all, of extending to all a share in the community's basic culture,

and opening up for all opportunities to be themselves, to be free, to be creative, to be solidary.

The following are, perhaps, the basic principles of a human, life-giving economy:

Set no bounds to your love.

God loves all and gives his sun and rain to all, good and bad because they need them.

Give to anyone who asks you.

Treat others as you would like them to treat you.

Jesus said to his friends:

I am sorry for these people. They have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them off hungry.

His friends said: Where in this deserted place could we get sufficient bread for such a large crowd to have enough to eat?

Jesus said: how many loaves have you?

They answered: seven, and a few small fish.

Then he instructed the crowd to sit down on the ground. He took the seven loaves and the fish, gave thanks, broke them and handed them to the disciples who gave them to the crowds. They all ate, and they collected what was left of the scraps, seven baskets full.

Is not the Earth a miraculously multiplying Loaf of Bread to be broken among all God's dear children?

Kalady

Samuel Rayan

God's Economy and Church's Response

In a world of tensions where millions of people are made prisoners of poverty and disease amid affluence and unprecedented possibilities, bishop Poulose of Trissur, Keralam, reflects on the task of christians. Their task is to realize in economic structures too their faith in the dignity and equality of all persons created in God's image, and the biblical principle of stewardship of life; to be solidary with the system's victims; to work with God to transform the world; to participate in people's struggles and hopes; to combat the alienation of misery no less than of abundance. This commitment has basis in the prophets' cry for justice, in Jesus' siding with the oppressed, and in the church's mystery as God's household.

The Bible tells us that God created women and men in his own image. This means, among other things, that God gives each person a unique and equal dignity and worth. Beneath all inequalities of skill, intelligence, and physique there is a basic equality of worth which outweighs all other things. This gift of fundamental equality does not level down natural and cultural differences, but affirms the equal worth and value of each person in his or her uniqueness. If this gift of fundamental equality-in-uniqueness has real meaning, it must have social, economic and political consequences. The God who so loves each and every one of his image-bearers can hardly be indifferent to the way they divide his good gifts of food, water, minerals, land, housing, knowledge, leisure and energy, to name but a few. In God's economic plan all human beings are supposed to be equal. If equality of worth is taken seriously, then it should be reflected in the economic structure of the society.

Yet today, with all our advanced civilization, with all our international aid agencies, we find that wealth is distributed more unevenly than ever before. In many parts of the world there are millions of people who are denied some of the basic physical necessities of life. They are prisoners of poverty and disease and illiteracy. When the rich nations of the west proclaim a 'New

World Order' it might sound like a proclamation of hope. But the truth is that to a large majority of the world's people it remains a proclamation of despair. The notion of a new world order as it is revealed in this proclamation is based on the self-appointment of rich nations to the role of a global policeman, wielding unfettered power. These notions must be rejected. Actually the ending of the East-West tension offers the possibility of addressing the root causes of North-South tension and conflict, the unjust distribution of the world's resources, and the denial of human rights, particularly to the minorities and indigenous peoples.

The world does need a new order, a new set of priorities that will put people first. The need is for an order that includes among its objectives: the protection of human rights for all people; the eradication of poverty; the redirection of scarce financial resources away from bombs and high-technology wars to the needs of poor people in the North and in the South; and the protection of the world's environment and maintenance of the world's biodiversity. Only then can the economic plans in the purposes of God be maintained.

It looks as if the Bible does not concern itself directly with economics. It does, however, generally, and in some places quite specifically, teach us what God requires of his people. Although this was inspired and written down many centuries ago, it remains our only infallible source of knowledge about how God would have us serve him. The general equity of God's commands concerning the church is as impelling today as in the days in which it was originally revealed. The concept with which we may profitably consider the various aspects of the church's economic task as the church attempts by grace to live according to God's way for humankind might be called *the stewardship of life*.

A *steward* is one who manages the property and affairs of another. Therefore, stewardship is the holding in trust for use, increase, and disposition that which properly belongs to another. Humankind is God's steward of all creation. All that we have is part of the earth which "is the Lord's" (Psalm 24). This idea is interwoven in the teachings of the prophets and Jesus, and they strongly criticized those who negated this principle.

Amos was a great social and religious reformer of the 8th century B. C. He lived at a time when the Kingdoms of Judah and

Israel were prosperous and successful. It was a time when most people were 'religious' and carried out the prescribed ceremonials and temple worship. But Amos received a higher vision of God's requirements: social and economic justice. He knew the exploitation that went on behind religion's pious façade. Honest men were sold into slavery (2: 6); the wealthy had no scruples in making money at the expense of the downtrodden (2: 7); as a result the poor became yet poorer, and soon sank beneath a load of debt (2: 8). So Amos' call is for justice and freedom (5: 14-15). God is just, and economic relationships must reflect that justice.

Jesus' anger, indignation and urgency to eradicate the causes of horrifying social injustice are quite evident throughout his ministry. He called the Pharisees hypocrites and whitewashed tombs (Matthew 23: 27), because they were more concerned with ritual purity and ceremony than they were with justice and mercy. He made an outcast Samaritan the hero of one of his best stories (Lk 10: 25-37). As a matter of fact, concern about society's treatment of people is interwoven into everything Jesus taught and did.

The early church was quick to draw out the implications of the life and teaching of Jesus. They instituted an experiment in 'living together' (a kind of communism) where those with means gave what they had in order that all may have enough. Of course, that experiment was short-lived, because they didn't care for economic planning. Probably they didn't know about it. But they did what they could. It shows the ideal which the first Christians accepted from their Lord — that all God's people should have the necessities of life.

Today we are in a better position to deal with the problem of poverty and related issues. Technology of increasing productivity has indicated the possibility of liquidating poverty. And yet if poverty remains in the society it is neither because God is not pleased nor is it because nature is not pleased, but because that which prevails in the society is not the spirit of justice and love. If that is the case, what is the role of the church in bringing economic freedom to the people?

The doctrine of the church is the doctrine of the economy of God's household (Colossians 1: 25; 1 Corinthians 9: 17; Ephesians 3: 2). Because the church exists for the sake of God's love for

the world (John 3: 16), there can be no sound teaching about the church that does not include the relationship of the church to our society's economy and the world's economy. To live in the spirit of God means solidarity with the world — we are to die to the world so that we might live for the transformation of the world. When economic or political institutions are perverted, the church is summoned to resist in order to prevent disaster, and defend life.

The popular view is that economic backwardness is one's fate, and prosperity a blessing of God. According to this view, we cannot alter God's plans, and all we can do is to reduce the suffering of the people with charity and relief works. Of course, we can also pray for the conversion of the hearts of the rich people!

But we know that giving alms and doing relief works serve only the purpose of a sort of social anaesthesia; only temporary relief is achieved. It is easy to do some social service and feel self-satisfied. As a matter of fact, the charity approach comes out of a static world view; it takes for granted that poverty is a natural part of the world; that is how the world has always been; that will be the case in the future as well; and therefore let us do whatever we can to alleviate the pain of the poor. This attitude won't help to achieve the kind of social change we need, nor contribute towards the kind of World God wants to create with us.

Today, let us face it, there is much criticism from various quarters that the churches do not use all the resources at their disposal for social and economic change. This criticism becomes sharper with the allegation that relief works undertaken by the churches are not altogether altruistic in nature, but are intended either to make profit or to make the annual reports look more colourful. May be there is gross exaggeration in this criticism, and yet it should not be left unnoticed. If these criticisms help to awaken us from our lethargy and dogmatic slumber, we should salute them.

Some others think that poverty and economic backwardness are due to overpopulation. The governments say that poverty persists due to backwardness in productivity, technology and industrialization. These views do not get to the heart of the problem. The problem of poverty in Asia is essentially man-made. It is a historically created condition. Poverty is created by the

unjust structure of the society. It is the by-product of wealth, the fruit of exploitation and injustice.

Educating the people and equipping them for organized operation are essential in order to restructure the society. If poverty is to be eradicated, if economic freedom is to be achieved, 'people should not be considered merely as objects of charity; they should become agents of change'. People's participation in social change is crucial. This means making people aware of their situation and organizing them for efforts through which they may become responsible participants in the new society. This new society would not, however, be a consumer's paradise. As Erich Fromm argues 'alienation of abundance' is no less dehumanizing than 'alienation in misery'. Also worth recalling is Spanish philosopher Unamuno's cry that he would rather be an anguished human being than a contented pig!

Man is to be liberated not only from poverty but also from all the chains which have bound him to servitude of one kind or another. At this juncture of the history of Asia our people have begun to realize this more than ever before. They have begun to acquire a new consciousness of their selfhood and humanity. They refuse to remain merely instruments of economic production or objects of political manipulation. They want to be the masters of their own destiny. The hopes and aspirations of the people in our time have deeper dimensions. They demand the fullest right of participation in the life of society where power is exercised and decisions are made which affect their welfare. To this end, they have already started ceaseless struggles in different parts of the world.

The church must respond to the expressed desires of the people, because these embody the will of God making itself manifest through the people. To understand the will of God and carry it out, the church must be in tune with the people. If the church fails to listen to people's yearnings for economic freedom, it fails in its essential mission of teaching the gospel, for it is not following the direction that God is leading. Since it is the people who determine historical change, the church should not try to lead. Rather it should support those who are engaged in the struggle for changing the economic structure, so that these people through their own efforts and decisions become free and independent.

But our wrong understanding of spirituality withdraws us from the ongoing struggles. Ordinarily our spirituality has nothing to do with the realities of life. For us it is a very individualistic and pious matter. This is contrary to the teachings of the Bible. We are asked to go into the room and shut the door and pray to the father who is in secret. The purpose is not withdrawal from the struggles of life, but gaining of strength to face them. It is by standing in the midst of the problems that we become the light of the world. True spirituality is exercised by participating, with God, in the process of transforming the world, of building a new human society, and thus making history a fulfilment of justice and love. The understanding of spirituality as detachment from concern for the problems of the world is dangerous because it gives sanction to oppressive and unjust structures.

The Bible speaks with unmistakable clarity about our partisanship with the victims of economic oppression. When there is grave injustice, the God of the covenant is not neutral, but takes the side of the poor and the oppressed. In the words of Charles West, God's justice means "not the balance of civil claims or the enforcement of contracts but outrageous partisanship for the poor and helpless, a concern to lift them up, to empower them as equal members of the community, to give them their humanity in the covenant." When Isaiah puts the nation's leaders on trial before God, Yahweh appears not as the impartial judge, but as the prosecuting counsel: "The Lord comes forward to argue his case and stands to judge his people. The Lord opens the indictment against the leaders of his people and their officers; you have ravaged the vineyards and the spoils of the poor are in your houses" (Isaiah 3: 13-15).

Our new understanding of the Gospel also compels us to take sides with the poor. Ordinarily we interpret the gospel as the message of reconciliation. But the danger of interpreting the gospel only as a message of reconciliation is that it is readily invoked to avoid the realities of conflict in human life and the costliness of the struggle for justice, freedom and human dignity. Popularly interpreted, the ministry of reconciliation may suggest the role of uninvolved mediator, the third disinterested party, whose job is to bring together the alienated opponents and help them arrive at a workable compromise. There is, no doubt, a

place for a mediatory role in every society. But such an understanding of the church's ministry of reconciliation would cheapen the New Testament proclamation. The Gospel Jesus proclaimed and embodied recognized the hard way of the cross, of death and resurrection, as the only road to genuine reconciliation.

Hence the Gospel of freedom cannot be neutral or indifferent to the historical struggles of the people. It creates partisanship towards the poor, the afflicted, and the humiliated. When the church loses the courage to stand by the side of the poor and powerless, it automatically becomes the religion of the rich and the mighty. God has chosen to accomplish his work of liberation and reconciliation by befriending the outcasts, by embracing the ungodly, and by ministering to the sick and hungry. The church cannot remain a silent spectator while confronting such a situation. It must take a strong stand, however risky it might be. To refuse to do so is not to remain neutral but to stand by default on the side of the mighty.

If the proclamation of the Gospel is to be meaningful in our time it must be closely related to the present struggles of the people for economic freedom, because that is the arena where the people find themselves today. In other words, the gospel should be proclaimed to men and women not in isolation, but in their social solidarity. For the church to proclaim the gospel in a world where the forces of evil are in operation, will always mean suffering. Of course, the church can always avoid this suffering by a stoic unconcern for society, and by being terribly preoccupied with its own little religious group. But that is to deny its own call and nature.

Our religious convictions compel us to take the stand on the side of the underprivileged, the powerless and the oppressed. This is how we understand our obedience to God in this hour. This means, in effect, a commitment not merely to bring immediate relief to the suffering, but also to work toward the creation of global structures which will ensure basic dignity and humane existence for all people. This also means taking a stand against the present structures of society which prevent the Kingdom of God from breaking in.

So, the question before us, from a theological point of view, is not whether the church can start new development projects so that the economic condition of the poor will be improved, but whether the church is ready to pay attention to the hopes and aspirations of the unprivileged masses, and to stand beside them in their struggle for the fulfilment of these hopes and aspirations. In other words, the real question for the church is not whether or not it will be able to give the lead in the development process, but whether or not it will identify itself with the powerless and voiceless. For various reasons this is a difficult task for the church as the church is more used to playing the role of the benevolent master than that of the suffering servant. Only if we experience the condemnation of the existing order by the standards of the Gospel, and go through a proper *metanoia*, conversion, by participating in the sufferings of God in the secular life, we shall be able to change the existing order.

Poulosè Mar Poulosè

For Sanity

Tissa, economist and theologian of Sri Lanka, reviews the origin and crisis of the world system, a 'killer system' of 'global apartheid', and proceeds to explain the structural adjustment policies imposed on our economies. Their contradictions and human costs are pointed out, and then, more positively, the elements of an alternative, just, international order are presented; and a call is issued for radical changes in personal life and in social structures, without which changes a new just social order cannot be brought into being.

A. The Global Crisis

Most of us know that the world is in crisis, though we may have different opinions about the nature and causes of the crisis.

It is not a crisis merely of science and technology but of *human inability to use them* as instruments for the human betterment of all. The issue is one of cultural, moral and spiritual values and of the use of resources including science and technology for the common good of humanity. At present they are used for the advantage of the wealthy, the powerful and the already privileged. They do contribute to human betterment, they also contribute in many ways towards increasing inequalities and injustices. The dominant culture uses science and technology for the profit maximization of the owners of capital and for consolidating the strength of states which are already powerful through their military forces and arms-industries and trade.

One of the principal aspects of the global crisis is the *large and growing gap between the rich and the poor* within countries and among countries. The process of production that we are all engaged in does not lead to the production of what is necessary and useful for all. Very much depends on what is called the "free market". The "free market" does not satisfy real demand, because the poor do not have the money to make an effective demand for even their urgent needs.

The World System

At the same time there is an *accumulation of wealth and power*, particularly by the big companies, the rich countries and the affluent elites of the poor countries. The poor are being marginalized. In the rich "developed" countries of Europe and North America there are about *35 million chronically unemployed* and hundreds of thousands homeless. For years and decades, the dominant system does not find an answer for them; the system itself having no concern for human beings. In the present situation *the poor of the poor countries* have no solution. The poor of the rich countries have at least social insurance, though they have other problems such as unemployment. But the poor of the poor countries are being thrown to the wall and they are in extreme difficulties. The little they have is also being now taken away by the affluent, and the foreign companies and debt repayment and interest charges.

This situation is very much the responsibility of the poor countries themselves. In whatever I say, I am not condoning anything that is wrong in our countries: the ignorance, the bad educational system, the inadequacy of technology, the lack of initiative and freedom, the elites, bribery and corruption, ethnic and religious conflicts, the violations of human rights.

This situation is due to the way *the resources of the world* have been divided up, and taken over by a few people. From about the beginning of the 16th century the peoples of Europe took over most of the open land spaces of the world — in the Americas, in Africa, Asia, Australia and New Zealand. The Russians expanded up to Siberia and Alaska. So the people of Europe took over almost the whole world for settlement or for colonizing.

In the *colonial system* the economies of the colonies were subjected to the needs and advantage of the colonizers. The lands were taken over, the industries were destroyed. The markets and trade were so organized as to benefit the colonizers, especially their companies. People were taken, made slaves, compelled to do forced labour. This system lasted 450 years or so. Its perpetrators interpret it as a service of civilization rendered by the Europeans to the rest of the world.

The peoples of Europe who inhabit these countries now: United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand and the Russians

got the main resources of the world not only by taking from other countries but also by taking the land. The principal inequality in the world since that European expansion is *the inequality of land and of resources*. In addition to the European take-over of land spaces, their big companies continue to take what they can from the poor countries. The land is not considered only in itself but also as a resource base supported by the *structure of the nation states*. They have thus control over most of the lands that are still available for migration and settlement. The world system is so much to the advantage of the Europeans that if one is of European stock one is insured for life, wherever one may be born. Whereas persons of other races face much more difficulty, especially those from Africa and parts of Asia, not to mention all the native peoples of the Americas, Australia and New Zealand.

This world system forms an integral part of the global crisis. Some of the world's people have taken over the resources. These are precisely the people who are now relatively, perhaps absolutely, declining in numbers. Their fertility rate is falling. They are ageing societies. Yet they hold on to the land and resources they have taken over. Their companies are going all over the world grabbing more land along with the Japanese and the other new rich. They want land for military bases, hotels, golf links, while keeping the plantations which they already own.

The European expansion by force all over the world and its maintenance by force is *the original sin of the present world order*. There is no way of changing it peacefully and bringing about a better sharing of resources and land as is required by the changes in world population. There is hardly any room for re-adjustment — except for migration on the terms laid down by the present big landowners of the world.

The people of the poor countries have no opportunity of moving to the empty land spaces. Nearly 60% of humanity is in Asia. They cannot move out. The Africans are also in great difficulty. They too cannot move. The world system is such that they are expected to accept that situation. All of Australia, Canada, the USA and Siberia are to remain relatively underpopulated. These are said to be developed countries. From another view point one might call them the undeveloped areas. Siberia is not developed. It makes no difference to Siberians whether the rulers of Russia be

the Czars, Lenin or Stalin or Yeltsin. That is the last European empire, and will doubtless break up further in the coming decades. Those are the underdeveloped areas.

The prevailing world system, then, is a form of *World Apartheid* or separate development, based principally on race.

It is within this situation that the global system has developed with the *United Nations (UN)*, the *International Monetary Fund (IMF)*, the *World Bank (WB)*, the *General Agreement of Trade and Tariff (GATT)* and other multi-lateral institutions. The world system is sustained by the ideology of the "free market" which is not really free.

The world economy is dominated by the Transnational Corporations (TNCs) which have an oligopolistic hold over most of the important products in the world market. In the "free market" system one can obtain food according to the funds at one's disposal. The very poor do not have funds and hence they are malnourished or even starve to death. Those who have money may consume a disproportionate amount of food at their pleasure. According to Susan George "The rich countries, not quite 25% of the world population consume between two-thirds and three-quarters of the world's production, including its food production. Their animals alone eat nearly a third of all cereals harvested".¹

The world system is a killer system. Despite unprecedented growth in economic productivity in the world as a whole, poverty increased in many countries, especially in South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America in the 1980s. According to the 1990 World Bank Report on the world's poor, in 1985 more than one billion persons, about a third of the "developing world", were living below the poverty line estimated by it to be \$ 370 per year. According to the UNICEF 15 million children die prematurely each year from hunger and hunger-related illnesses. They could be saved by an infinitesimal portion of the food harvested in the world. Susan George calculates the amount required for this to be about 3.6 million tons of cereals altogether even if they do not have other foods. This is only one five hundredth (0.002%) of the total world harvest.²

1 Susan George: *Ill Fares the Land*, Penguin, London 1990, p. 9.

2 Susan George, op. cit., pp. 4-5. She writes further "We could apply the same sort of arithmetic in discussing food for the 450 million people FAO classifies

The world system is a killer system due to:

- exploitation by the local rulers and elites;
- colonialism and its consequences;
- racist immigration policies of land-rich countries;
- unfair terms of international trade; high food prices;
- wastage of food and resources, consumerism, not sharing;
- large scale unemployment in many countries;
- homelessness;
- non-cultivation of agricultural lands;
- the burden of foreign debt affecting adversely the poor;
- corruption including of TNCs;
- violence, crime, sexual harassment;
- arms race, low intensity conflict policy of the USA.

The Western capitalist countries have a central place in this killer system as they are at the heart of the world system in its historical origins and its maintenance today, through the TNCs, the nation states and the world order that neglects justice to the poor. It is this unjust system that is called world order. This "law and order" is the result of violence and plunder; and now it is legalized. The rest of the world has to accept it as a lawful order that must be respected and maintained. This system is supposed to continue always. All other social and economic systems are required to restructure and adjust themselves to suit the global system.

B. Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP)

The system of structural adjustment programmes being pushed by the IMF and the World Bank is leading to a globalization of the world economy under the domination of global finance. A *new colonial system* is being imposed on the poor countries by an alliance of the elites of the poor countries and the rich of the rich countries. The global TNCs are the principal agents of this process, though they act through the nation states and the IMF and World Bank. Neo liberal economic policies are being imposed on the poor, debtor countries.

as severely malnourished. Let's grant a generous ration of 2,740 calories a day, or one ton of grains per 3.5 adults per year. We would arrive at 128 million tons of cereals required to wipe out serious hunger and malnutrition — 8% of the world's most recent harvest, less than the United States feeds to its livestock." p. 5.

SAP propose changes in a country's policies apparently intended to bring about rapid industrialization, through transfer of technology, with availability of credit, foreign aid: as loans, grants and investment. The policy package includes:

- introducing open market policies in trade;
- free trade zones;
- promotion of export crops, export industries and tourism;
- opening of country to foreign investment;
- national and foreign ownership of the means of production;
- privatization of public sector enterprises;
- setting up of stock exchanges through which local and foreign capital can buy up assets;
- liberalization of exchange, trade and banking; freer movement of money as between countries;
- constitutional guarantees for foreign capital;
- provision by state of infrastructure of communications, roads and transportation for private enterprise and foreign companies;
- reducing budgetary deficits, regressive taxation;
- reduction of taxes on capital, thus affecting income distribution;
- reducing public sector in the economy, and even administration;
- cutting subsidies for social services such as education and health;
- reducing rights of workers, to facilitate termination of services:

All this has impact on gender, race and ethnic relations.

These affect the whole gamut of economic activities and social relations of a society. On the basis of such adjustments foreign funds are made available, with external debt repayment as a primary objective. Through these policies countries are integrated within the world economic system in which the transnational corporations dominate many lines of production, distribution, research and technology. The power of the TNCs grow with their mergers and take over of state and private enterprises. The local political power is compelled to help them as a condition of further aid, and the local elites share economic benefits with the TNCs.

There are certain imperatives in the present economic situation of poor countries which have to be recognized and dealt with, with or without IMF/WB recommendations. We must learn

to live within our means. We must reduce our budgetary and balance-of-payments deficits. We must avoid losses and waste in the public sector. Bribery, corruption and favoritism must be eliminated. Civil wars must be ended with peace and justice to all. There must be freedom for enterprise and reward for work and initiative.

There are some gains for poor countries from this process: the introduction of new technology and skills, the transfer of some factories to these countries, the provision of new lines of employment, the growth of the infrastructure of communication. If they are very careful, not too dependent on the foreign sources and not involved in internal conflicts, they may develop to newly industrialised country (NIC) status. This however is not the position of most countries. Nor is the model of industrialization widely replicable due to lack of resources and its exploitative nature. Some have to pay the price for others to advance in this competitive, anti-social, ecologically harmful process.

Drawbacks of SAP

Are the SAP remedies of the IMF/WB the way forward for the poor countries? Have we to accept naively the whole package of policies that are thrust on us by the foreign 'donors'? Even the World Bank and the IMF admit that the strategies they have sponsored have not worked satisfactorily in most countries of the world. Dr. Rehman Sobhan of Bangladesh, analyzing the data in the 1992 World Development Report of the World Bank, shows how only a few of the 76 countries which have accepted the SAP reforms have improved their economic performance in the 1980s. In general 66 countries faced a decline in their growth rates in the 1980s compared to the earlier period. 53 countries registered a decline in their export growths. Not all of them were exposed to the reforms, but most were. Evidence seems to indicate that though Structural Adjustment Programmes are claimed to help the development of the poor countries, *these are often being under-developed further*, and made more dependent on the foreign 'donors' (Economic and Political Weekly of 25th July 1992).

All the same the IMF and WB propose SAP as a *universal panacea for all countries* and all situations, except, of course, for the dominant countries which are themselves in debt. The UNICEF, UNDP and ILO and UN Economic Commission for Africa

(UN-ECA) have raised substantial and legitimate challenges about the operation of the SAP policies especially in Africa (cf. UNICEF, State of the World's Children, annual reports; UNDP, Human development Report, annual reports; The World Bank, World Development Report, annual reports; UN-ECA, Africa Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes, 1989).

Contradictions in the SAP (from Sri Lankan experience)

i) SAP are said *to save foreign exchange* but they have actually increased foreign dependence due to several causes. SAP are expected to increase state revenue and reduce deficits. Yet they often reduce the state's earning capacity by transferring profit-making public enterprises to foreigners and/or local private enterprise, e.g. Sri Lanka State Distilleries Corporation, Ceylon Oxygen, were handed over at give away prices. Foreign investors are permitted to repatriate profits sometimes even 100%. There is often a loss of revenue due to tax concessions to capital, while making the burden of indirect taxes heavier on the poor.

ii) The Budget deficit, after grants, has been regularly high during the past decade.

iii) The balance of trade has not improved.

iv) SAP are expected to help the debtor countries to meet their debt obligations and improve their financial situation. But the liberalization of imports and related measures often worsen debt, and debt service increases. Our external debt has been mounting in volume and has taken its toll on our export earnings.

v) Our debt service payment has increased several fold during the past 17 years since liberalization of the economy was introduced. Increase in debt service payments lead to further demand for loans, to a fall in the exchange value of the rupee, to further inflation, to further sale of our public assets, to more ownership of our enterprises by foreigners. The vicious circle of indebtedness.

vi) *Devaluation of currency* recommended by SAP was expected to increase exports and reduce imports. A UN survey of 12 SAPs found little improvement in export earnings. With devaluation

—prices of imports rise; cost of living rises.

—foreign loans encourage imports to be kept up despite devaluation.

- Commodity prices fall as more exporters compete for the same markets.
- Devaluation increases burden of debt.
- earnings go to payment of debts instead of investment in development or essential services.

vii) **Foreign Aid:** At the global level, the stark reality is that at present there is no net aid or financial transfers from the rich to the poor countries as a whole. The poor countries now transfer annually about \$30,000,000,000 (\$30 bn) to the rich countries, especially as debt repayment.

viii) **SAP** are said to be for industrialization. SAP implies a false dichotomy between "import substitution" and "export promotion". Some of the most spectacular successes of "export oriented growth" came after a preparatory phase of intense import substitution with very strong state intervention as in South Korea. The two can, and generally need, be complementary.

ix) **Agriculture**

The very forces which encourage global food production are also conducive to a contraction in the standard of living and decline in the demand for food. *Food aid* from excess supplies in rich countries discourages local food production, changes food habits, encouraging consumption of foreign products and processed food often subsidized by governments in the foreign countries as the European Community and North America.

SAP fosters take-over of good agricultural land by foreign TNCs for export crops. Resources are being locked up for export purposes while people starve. SAP replace food crops with export crops increasing dependence on foreign markets — altogether a "recipe for starvation".

Relative neglect of agricultural production and of the development of agro-industries based on our raw materials, the reduction of subsidies on food, and more recently the removal of the subsidy on fertilizers are making life hard for the poorer population especially for farmers: SAP reduce food production, drive small farmers out of production and ownership of their lands, making them agricultural laborers or increasing the urban unemployed. The sturdy peasantry is increasingly transformed into

an army of landless seasonal plantation workers. This is happening even in Europe and North America which have 34 million unemployed.

Control of seed markets by the giant agro-industrial enterprises such as Cargill INC. establishing "plant breeder rights" to the detriment of millions of small farmers, leads to the destruction of bio-diversity. Pesticides used in export agriculture damage ecology.

The needs of debt servicing lead to an effort to produce more especially for export, this contributes to the *over utilization of the land and environmental degradation* that in turn reduces agricultural productivity and worsens food shortages as in Sub-Saharan Africa. We export what we produce and import what we consume. Our export prices fall, whereas import prices increase. Thus our debts increase.

x) Politics and Economy

The SAP advocates reduction of state activity in the economic field as a condition for economic growth. They therefore urge and demand the privatization of all state economic enterprises and the de-regulation of the private sector. But the reality is that the nations that have advanced economically like Japan and the East Asian NICS have had strong governments giving direction to the economy. They fostered and protected their enterprises against foreign competition, at least till they were strong enough to compete successfully with others. They created the environment for economic growth through subsidized credit, protection and by carrying out land reforms that increased local food production. Their opening to the free market is in an orderly and calculated manner, following success, while the Sri Lankan opening is injudicious and from a position of weakness.

Privatization of state enterprises increases prices of these services for the poor: electricity, water and irrigation, roads and transportation; and tends to subsidize private investors. De-regulation of private enterprise leaves room for much corruption and favoritism even in the process of privatization. Despite the rhetoric of democracy there is a lack of transparency in discussion and decisions regarding conditionalities imposed on the debtor countries without exposure even to the legislature and select

committees, much less to the general public affected by them. The policy of privatization is being pushed relentlessly by the IMF/WB combination. Once again the main industrial, agricultural and service sectors of the aid-dependent poor countries are falling into the hands of the local elites and the big multinational corporations.

IMF/WB policies insist on *demobilizing the state* in poor countries, and leaving things to the mercy of market forces. The private sector is weak in most poor countries. The countervailing power of the state is removed and the country is rendered defenseless against the powerful TNCs which take up most sectors of the economy. On the contrary the State exercises a strong regulatory function on the economy as on agricultural production and marketing in the rich countries as in Canada through the Canadian Wheat Marketing Board and similar bodies such as Milk Board.

The countries become dependent on foreign aid for balancing the budget. The governments agree to donors' conditions in order to survive. The sovereignty of poor countries is thus undermined by the conditionalities placed on aid. Their budget and policy decisions are made at Paris donors' meetings.

xi) Social and Human Rights concerns

The rich countries express concern over human rights, and rightly so; yet SAP deny human rights in social and economic spheres. *The SAP policies are hard on the poor* by reducing subsidies, cutting of social services, making education and health fee paying services. In some areas these policies cause famine. Wages are kept low, inequalities increase and the social services built up over the years are reduced if not abolished. Strikes are effectively banned. Job security is reduced and labour laws tightened against workers. Cost of living rises.

SAP has brought about a growth of social inequality, widening the gap between the rich and the poor. The markets are manipulated by the rich claiming that they are only following market-led policies. SAP is said to bring about long-term gains, to be prepared by short term pains. The worsening social conditions have led to increasing social discontent, violence, increase in expenditure for defence, prisons, law and order. As the country becomes poorer and there is less of a surplus for the ruling classes,

there is a tendency for them to resort to other forms of manipulation of the people. Ethnicism is one such approach. The fact that the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka coincides with the liberalization of the economy and the strengthening of the SAP measures leaves room for questioning whether the civil war is not partly the result of the SAP itself.

"The social disasters produced by the SAP are not the result of marginal errors which can be corrected by so called 'Structural adjustment with a human face', or 'integrating the social dimension in the programmes' etc. They are the logical and necessary consequences of what is wanted" (Samir Amin).

Despite the rhetoric of women's charter and rights, such modernization has meant the greater *exploitation of women*. The high prices and food shortages and worsening conditions of health place heavier burden on women. Women's rights are not safeguarded but sacrificed for the sake of earning foreign exchange; young women are exploited in free trade zones without workers' associations and suitable conditions of work or living. Women are compelled to migrate to foreign countries to earn foreign exchange to make ends meet, due to increase in prices and unemployment of males.

Reduction of the productive capacity of the country by *running down of our (non-renewable) resources* such as forests, minerals, gems, coast line, fisheries. In 1945 the forest cover in Sri Lanka was estimated at 45% of the country; now it is estimated at 20%, despite the efforts of the government for re-forestation.

Large scale many-sided *environmental pollution* for which the agencies that pollute are not accountable. Our canals and rivers are polluted; the rivers carry much of the top soil due to erosion. The city roads are full of petrol fumes due to heavy traffic. Ecological and environmental damage is not taken into account in the calculation of the GNP.

xii) *International Impact*: These SAP policies bring about changes in relations among nations. The poor countries return to a state of being colonized once again through controls exercised through the World Bank and the IMF which in turn are controlled by the rich powers: the USA, Western Europe and Japan with the connivance of the benefiting local elites.

The world is moving towards a larger regionalization and a certain delinking in that framework. We need to think much more of understanding and planning among the countries of South Asia and Africa.

All these indicate that it is timely that we *examine more carefully the ideological claims for the SAP*. An intellectual neo-colonialism tends to accept the SAP paradigm rather uncritically. The poor countries need to regain potentiality to design their own future after careful investigation of results of past two decades. An informed national dialogue is essential; people affected must have a voice in deciding their future.

The resistance to these measures may grow as the poverty of the masses increases and as the poor in the rich countries too feel the pinch of the marginalization by the powerful. There is likely to be a return to the social function of the economy and of the state. But for many poor who will be eliminated during the coming decade, this will be too late. Despite all our technological advancement, the 1990s may be a most cruel decade.

Humanity's hope is in the rise of a social moral consciousness that leads to a global peoples' movement for the transformation of persons and structures at local, national and global levels.

The global ecological crisis and the depletion of some of the resources is warning us of the limits of science and technology and of the dangers of their being utilized too selfishly without adequate care and concern for Nature, the balance of the earth system and overall human values.

C. Need of a Just International Order

We are the first generation in humanity's long history that has the means to ensure to all an adequate means for a decent human life and that almost in abundance. A just solution to the problems of the vast and harrowing global imbalances requires a just world order. This needs more than changes within individual countries.

Its objectives should be:

1) that every human person is ensured the basic essentials of life and is respected as a person without discrimination.

2) that each society is able to provide the basic amenities for the dignified life and cultural development of its members.

3) that our planet earth is cared for and is so treated that it would be a suitable home for present and future humanity.

To realize this vision we need:

A) **A new value orientation** specially among decision makers and the wealthy nations. We have to learn to respect human beings, reverence human lives and transcend the narrow limits of our particular loyalties if they clash with the common good of humanity. This is also the noblest inspiration of all the world religions and of the democratic and socialistic aspirations of humanity.

B) Within nation states there should be an **economic, political, social and cultural life** that provides at least the basic essentials for all. This may require regaining control over one's resources and redirecting the production and distribution processes to satisfy the needs of all rather than serve the profits of a few or of the TNCs.

C) the policies of nations and of the community of nations must **combat the worldwide imbalances**.

Some specific means for this could be:—

i) **Fairer terms of trade**. They cannot be left to mere market forces dominated by the powerful, or by military might. The history of the oil prices illustrates the fate of the poor countries in this situation. Organizations of producers may be necessary to ensure fairer terms of trade, though Opec is not quite a propitious example for this. The operation of the massive oligopolies created by the TNCs needs to be controlled by an international authority in the interests of justice and of the free market itself if there is a belief in the philosophy of the market.

ii) **Resource transfers** from the rich countries to the poor countries on a multilateral basis and without strings attached. This has to include transfer of technology, especially in order to make life possible for all. An international tax on transnational corporations according to their incomes or turnover could be levied by an international authority and the proceeds re-cycled to help development of the poor countries. Efforts such as of UNCTAD to

regulate the transfer of technology and evolve a code of conduct for TNCs have not borne much fruit during the past 15 years.

Even the third world countries have not cooperated among themselves in this regard. If the oil exporting countries made available their excess capital to the poor countries for their development on reasonable terms, instead of depositing it in the banks of capitalist countries, the world debt problem of the 1980s would not have been so acute.

iii) The foreign debt of the poor countries should be cancelled as these countries have generally paid much more than they owe to the rich countries. The Third World debt increased from \$ 86 billion in 1971 to \$ 1,473 in 1990. Today the net financial transfer from the poor to the industrialized countries is higher than the flow of resources from the rich to poor countries. Between 1982 and 1987 Latin America transferred \$ 147.5 billions to the rich countries. This is 23.4% of their exports of goods and services during that period. Between 1977 and 1988, Brazil alone paid \$ 104 billion as interest payment for a debt which was \$ 106 billion in 1988.³

This debt repayment imposes a severe drain on the poor countries. The Brundtland report comments on the consequences for Latin America: "This massive drain represents 5-6% of the region's gross domestic product, around a third of the internal savings, and nearly forty percent of the export earnings. It has been achieved by adjustment policies that impose severe and regressively skewed cuts in wages, social services, investment, consumption and employment, both public and private, further aggravating social inequity and widespread poverty. Pressures on the environment and resources have increased sharply in the search for new and expanded exports and replacement for imports, together with the deterioration and overexploitation of the environment brought about by the swelling number of the urban and rural poor in desperate struggle for survival. A substantial part of Latin America's growth in exports are raw materials, food, and resource-based manufactured goods. So Latin American natural resources are being used not for development or to raise living standards,

3 Waldir Pires: "L'Amérique Latine regarde vers l'Europe 93", Conference at Rimini, Italy, 3rd Nov. 1990, pp. 15-16.

but to meet the financial requirements of industrialized country creditors."⁴

The burden of debt repayment by the poor countries often means depriving the poor of the means of livelihood and loading additional burdens on them. The debtor countries are being forced to sell out their precious environmental resources to pay the debt. Massive deforestation, as in the Amazon, is affecting the whole of humanity. Poor countries are being compelled to give up their traditional balanced cultivation patterns to produce cash crops for export to repay debts.⁵ The debt crisis, even alone, raises grave moral questions for all concerned as it is unjustly causing the death of people and serious environmental damage.

iv) **A control over arms production is essential.** This should apply not only to nuclear weapons but also to conventional arms. The European countries are almost all arms producers. The socialist economies also export arms. European arms exports are largely to the Asian, African and Latin American countries. They foster the wars in the third world. The European countries export instruments of torture and means of chemical warfare also. Thus, despite their concern for human rights, they are partly responsible for fomenting, fostering or favouring over 125 wars, since 1945, in and among the Third World countries, (which have their own internal causes also).

v) **Greater regional cooperation** in economic matters for the good of the region as well as of the world. This can be a means of encouraging regional development cooperation and limiting the power of the TNCs in production, marketing, banking and other services.

vi) **Measures for the care of Nature** including the non-renewable resources, the seas and space. This is an essential program for the coming years. We know that the earth cannot sustain the present pattern and extent of resource consumption; but we fail to take adequate steps to prevent this ecocide or genocide through the extinction of the life support systems of mother earth. This requires a life-style that is not so wasteful as at present. The

4 *Our Common Future*: Brundtland Report, pp. 74-75.

5 Tissa Balasuriya: *The Debt Trap Closes in on Sri Lanka*, Logos, Colombo, Oct-Dec. 1989, pp. 137-189.

consideration of the limits of resources, the pollution of nature and the needs of the poor should motivate the European peoples not to take such an undue share of the earth's resources and throw so much away as waste. The value of what is thrown away is enough to fill the hungry stomachs of millions of poor people.

vii) Euro-American countries have a major say in the working of the international agencies such as the United Nations, the *International Monetary Fund (I. M. F.)*, the *World Bank*, *GATT* and other UN bodies. At present the decision-making power in these organizations is based on the capital invested in them by the countries or on their position in the UN Security Council as victors in World War II. Such a use of international bodies for the fostering of the power of the already powerful cannot bring about justice to the poor countries. On the contrary the UN agencies tend to be a means for the consolidation of the unjust status quo. The efforts of the poor countries and of UNCTAD to reform the UN system or bring economic justice through them were largely unsuccessful. Thus the failure of the UN to usher in a New International Economic Order despite much pressure from the poor countries in the mid 1970s. This is a challenge to the good will of the European peoples and countries. Those who hold power very seldom give it up unless they are forced to do so. Unless there are improvements in the working of agencies like the I. M. F. these international economic bodies will hardly help the poor countries.

viii) An effective international authority is required to see that the needs of all are met and that the earth's resources are well used. The League of Nations set up after World War I and the United Nations of the post World War II era have been unable to bring about justice or even peace in the world. These have been instruments mainly in the hands of the victors for their advantage. A world authority will have to control and discipline the TNCs for the common good of humanity. These are so powerful and not subject to the control of nation states even if states wanted to do so.

ix) An international tax to be paid by the nations on the basis of their G. N. P. or on the land base in relation to population, or for the non-use of productive agricultural land. The resources of the earth can be held by nations only as a trust for the sake of humanity. They may not be destroyed, wasted, but put to

productive use when human beings are in need of them. Some means must be devised for the world community to obtain the benefit of the resources that the Author of nature has placed at the disposal of the human family. This will involve a major change in the life style and use of resources by the rich peoples everywhere especially in the affluent countries.

x) Most important of all, **population resettlement** in a rational way in the free spaces of the earth. This has to include a change in the immigration laws of countries, specially of those which have large extents of uncultivated agricultural land. This proposal meets with a certain fear and grave concern among the white peoples as their numbers are decreasing and there is a cultural tradition of fear of the peril from outside. It was earlier called the yellow peril at the turn of the last century by writers like Spengler. Now the population balance is decidedly in favour of the Asian and African peoples. A challenge for the Europeans is whether they will accept the non-Europeans as human beings equal in rights to them?

It is beautiful to speak of the "other" as a philosophical category, and to talk of "accepting the other as the other", but when it comes to sharing our resources and land with the other races there is immediate resistance and a recourse to all manner of legitimations for not doing so. This is a cause of many local ethnic conflicts as in Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland. These take place within the wider world context of global Apartheid.

The US operation "desert shield" of August-November 1990 showed that it is possible to move 300,000 persons half way across the world and set up camp even in the desert in a hostile natural and political environment. Unfortunately the super powers can spend billions of dollars on armaments and space travel, but the world does not have the means to settle the people without land on the lands without people. When there is a will there is a way. The hard fact of the matter is that for the European peoples the other races do not really count as human beings with equal dignity and rights. This was seen in the way the refugees in the Gulf crisis have been treated during these months.

xi) Provision for the 14,000,000 **refugees** of the world must be a responsibility of the world community. The refugees are the consequence of the imbalances in the world, coming down

from the past. Europe has a major share in this responsibility. Thus France cannot wash its hands of the responsibility for the colonial wars in Vietnam, Kampuchea and Laos, or Britain of the Gulf crisis thanks to its past colonial policies. The fate of Africa is a common European responsibility with the carving out of Africa to suit European expansion. When the European population was expanding they went all over the world and settled down where they liked. They took other peoples' resources to meet their needs. Even today their descendants are in many poor countries. Even today Sri Lanka has about 40,000 descendants of the Portuguese and Dutch settlers.

But Europe, after moving millions of persons across countries and continents as their slaves or cheap labor, is now closing its doors to foreign settlers. Of the 14 million refugees, Europe had only 600,000, as of December 1989. As wars, political oppression, violent revolutions, natural disasters continue, the number of refugees will increase. They are human beings who are victims of the killer system that dominates people's lives. The world must provide for them. Europe, which has taken so much from the world, and whose present life style also demands much, has a clear responsibility to provide for more refugees than it does at present.

xii) Compensation for past and present injustices.

The economic relations of Europe and Asia are determined by the situation in the contemporary world. These are in themselves unjust as the terms of trade are unjust and unfair towards the producers of primary products. A just relationship among the nations would have to take into account the past history of colonialism and the transfer of wealth from the now poor countries to the powerful colonial rulers of the past few centuries. What would be the compensation due for the removal of raw materials at very cheap prices, the destruction of the economic self-reliance of some nations by the neglect or transformation of their agriculture for producing primary commodities for export.

Sri Lanka is a typical example. Three colonial powers ruled the country or large sections of it during 440 years from 1505 to 1948. They transformed a self-reliant economy into one that exported tea, rubber and coconut, and imported food. They came to these countries to exploit their wealth. They left the countries dependent on imports. The return of the artistic treasures taken

from the conquered countries and presently in the Museums of Europe and America could be a symbolic expression of this compensation.

The carrying out of such structural changes in the world requires a world authority that can check the abuse of power by the nation states and companies and bring about a just allocation of land and resources among the peoples of the world.

D. Transformation of Persons

The major structural changes needed for a just world cannot be brought about without deep *changes in the values and lifestyles* of persons. Transformed individuals joined in groups have to struggle against the forces of collective selfishness that dominate society. Groups and institutions, such as the churches, concerned with the human future must try to bring about a new type of person, whose loyalty to humankind and our common planetary home is primary. Such a person would not neglect his or her own home, locality or country, but rather so care for each as not to hurt others and mother earth.

Given today's consumeristic waste and ruin, such persons would try to *simplify their wants*. Instead of maximizing their possessions they would share what they have with others, demanding little for themselves. At present the affluent are a burden to humanity and nature due to their disproportionate consumption of limited resources. Genuine concern for the neighbor is the condition of our own self-realization as human persons. This is also the core message of all the world's religions and ennobling philosophies. This is implicit in the universal declaration of human rights promulgated by the United Nations.

Respect for nature will enable such persons to rediscover the original and organic beauty of the ordinary things of life — bodies of water, tree, fresh air, the sunset, the moon, the birds, fish, flowers, music and the creative arts. This is a quality of life that urban technological culture tends to neglect. It reminds one of Francis of Assisi. It needs to be rediscovered for the human person to find fulfilment in a way that excludes greed, acquisitiveness, destruction and waste.

This ideal of service is naturally difficult in capitalistic societies. It may now be felt in most places that capitalist values

have triumphed over those of socialism. The failures of centrally-directed, Stalinist socialism should not induce us to think that the values of service and the common good, that inspired socialist thinking, can be overlooked. *Finding a middle path* between the freedom of initiative of persons and the care for the common good of all remains a challenge for the world. The rich countries have a major responsibility in this due to their wealth, technological advance and claim to help develop others.

This is a call to *a radical conversion*. It entails transcending many of our narrower loyalties and priorities. The inter-dependence of the world does not permit us to neglect the needs of others without ourselves being also harmed in the process. The present world crisis summons us to growth-awareness of and sensitivity to others. This is a never ending process.

Religions can be excellent motivating forces for such a process and programme, provided their messages are taken seriously. This is, however, a very difficult ideal to be achieved. Our selfishness, especially national or racial selfishness, are principal obstacles towards sharing at the global level.

A re-education of the affluent has to be undertaken. Their mentalities have been formed to consider themselves benefactors of the rest of the world. A profound meditation is required for them to accept not to take too much out of the resources of nature for their own livelihood. The campaigns such as against the nuclear weapons were relating to issues in which there was a self-interest of Europeans and Americans. Likewise in the peace or environment movements. It is much more difficult to motivate campaigns in which people have no gain in physical and monetary terms. On the contrary they may have to give up what they have; or be prepared to share what they have with others who they feel are not of their own race or group.

The content of instruction and the *value education* in the schools need to be developed to bring about a new generation who are more conscious of and empathetic towards the global issues. The youth from different races who grow up together and are educated in the same institutions may feel a commonality of interests more than their parents of the earlier generation. The mass media, informal education in people's movements and travel can help very much in this. For this it is necessary to get beyond

the superficial attitude of the mass media that present daily news and pictures of troubles in different parts of the (third) world — a sort of catastrophism — without going into their deeper causes. Tourism would have to be more than a mere holiday away from home; well planned tourism can bring different peoples in genuine contact with each other for their mutual information, understanding, and support. Study other cultures and religions; enrich oneself in culture contacts ... otherness ... phenomenon of fear and rejection... barriers to be transcended ... emigration and slave market... accomplices in it.

Above all a *re-education of the heart and will* is needed, so that the affluent may identify with the indigent, and decide to take the difficult but necessary steps for a just redistribution of incomes, wealth and other resources. Unfortunately, the relatively well off tend to harden their hearts against the cries of the starving. Various legitimations and excuses are found for not dealing with their part of the causes of these problems. The international problems are seen as too complicated for local understanding and action. The poor countries are rightly blamed for corruption, internal conflicts, lack of hard work; but these should not be reasons for others for not doing what they need to do in their circumstances.

The conversion of the affluent is the most urgent religious and Christian mission in the 1990s. It is indispensable for the life of persons in all parts of the world. If the European and American consciences are not awakened to justice there is not much hope for those outside. The radical demands of Christianity must be brought home to people in the rich countries. Europe and America need to be re-evangelised. This is not necessarily for bringing back the unchurched to the church, but for motivating all to take seriously the radical demands of the gospel of Jesus: of loving, caring and sharing. This is a call to struggle against the personal and collective selfishness of the so called developed peoples and countries.

This requires a *systematic group analysis* of personal orientations in life and of the social structures. A clear understanding is required of why the so called development decades of the 60s, 70s, and 80s failed to transform most societies even for adequate productivity, let alone just redistribution. The

enemies of the common good of the people everywhere should be identified. The principalities and powers that dominate the killer system must be named and contested. The ensemble of mechanisms that oppress the poor peoples of the world must be named and evaluated in terms of the demands of justice.

There should be *organized conscientious objection* to all forms of exploitation: such as through trade, international agencies, the manipulation of the mass media, the trickery and masquerading of leaders as saviours of the people. Ordinary persons in these countries would have to ask themselves what they have been doing while the social system built up this machine of death as our global economic and political system. Western peoples should call in question the false or mercenary values for which the European Community and North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) are being set up. The right to life of people elsewhere depends on the affluent West not depriving them of the means of living. They should contest the unjust policies of their countries which kill others (a sort of modern piracy), such as:

- agricultural subsidies that harm food production in poor countries,
- banking systems that give cover to stolen funds through secret numbered accounts,
- production and sale of arms that provoke wars and prolong them,
- usurious interest charges on foreign debts,
- unfair immigration laws,
- despoiling of nature, pollution of the environment,
- exhausting of non-renewable resources,
- exploitation of women in tourism, in industries, and as migrant labour.

What we say for the West is also applicable to the *third world elites*; for these too generally take too much out of the meager wealth of the poor countries. This is the message of all the religions. The present world situation shows how much more needs to be done for the Westerners and the third world elites to become decent human beings who do not exploit others.

All these mean that the religions, including Christianity, have to rethink their message and practical priorities. Churches have to realize that they have been very much part of the problem

affecting the right to life of poor peoples. Hence a different conception of:

- the goals of mission
- spirituality and holiness, understanding of virtues and of prayer
- a life-related and action-oriented way of doing theology
- formation for priesthood, religious life and lay ministries
- of liturgy and its relation to life
- attitude towards political issues, local, national and global
- training in struggle against injustice, for justice
- peace education, social analysis, anthropology.

E. Action for Social Transformation

The Asian churches should reflect deeply on the social implications of the gospel in the fast evolving situation of their peoples being subjected to new forms of capitalism and even a neo-colonialism, in which the rich of all the countries tend to be together vis-a-vis the poor of all the countries.

While action on immediate social problems is necessary there should be a consciousness of the difference between remedies for the victims of a system and the remedying of the system itself that causes such problems. It is not enough to have approaches of merely crisis management, perhaps based on the view that these are short term misfortunes which would be corrected by the trickle down effect once a country reaches the NIC status.

Effective remedies must be sought to change the basic power relations and policies that exploit the poor. In this we should note that:

- local micro economic solutions alone cannot remedy macro economic problems, based on structured power relations within and among countries.
- private enterprise cannot resolve problems of public policy such as a fair distribution of incomes, provision of employment or choice of a path of just and sustainable development.
- social service, however benevolent, cannot make up for structured social injustice.
- employment generation on a small scale, very necessary as it is, is not a solution for the take-over of main sectors in the economy by the TNCs.

The state must not be allowed to disengage itself from the responsibility for health, education and nutrition of the people. These are necessary investments for other lines of development such as production as well as conflict resolution. Several rich countries insist on these social services, precisely because of the evils of their neglect during recent past. We should not be trapped to support the de-mobilizing of the state and the indiscriminate privatization of the public sector, in the name of free market and private enterprise.

Lasting authentic social change has to be anchored in the grass roots; but it cannot come only from the grassroots. It has to be from a broader base and backed by a good understanding of and dealing with the wider national and global processes. Hence the need of local, national and global action and a networking among them. The needed coalitions have to evolve with common targets and respecting their diversities.

Since much of the thrust in the neo-liberal colonization is through the control over the economy by means of structural adjustment programmes (SAP) and related policies, it is essential that the public have an understanding of these issues and their implications. This requires much public adult education for *economics literacy* within its contemporary jargon. Otherwise many give up, thinking these matters are beyond the ken of ordinary citizens even though they pay the price of such policies. A long term effort is required for the formation of an informed public opinion. The aggravation of problems and people's struggles around felt issues can however quicken the pace of public consciousness.

Such awareness-building education and action will have *political implications*. Some argue that these would involve religion in politics. This is true, but it need not necessarily be party politics. Further there can be no true religion that supports injustice; and removal of injustice requires political action too. As Mahatma Gandhi said one who says that politics has nothing to do with religion does not know what religion is. In this grave situation we need to develop the spirituality of Christian participation in a common endeavor and struggle for the sake of the people. Such considerations can be meaningful for the evaluation of the activities of parishes, lay organizations, NGOs and religious congregations.

Youth problems are an important area for reflection by the Asian churches. Of special significance for us is the alienation of the youth from the religions and the Church in particular, in so far as our activities do not respond to their aspirations. Today they seek employment and security of life. Large scale and continuing unemployment gives them a sense of worthlessness of their lives. Those employed are subject to much exploitation, as are the young women workers in garment factories, migrant workers, women in the tourist-sex industry.

Today's youth represent a different cultural context. We need to respond to the aspirations of the people of our time: to youth in the Western world who have lost meaning and hope in the world built up by their fore-parents; to youth's aspirations for honesty, authenticity, freedom, responsibility and sharing so that all may have a chance of life; care for earth, fear that the resources will be exhausted before long and they will have to face the consequences. Youth see the hypocrisy of the system, and see no way out; helplessness; the uncontrolled power of the corporate world; the irrelevance or inefficacy of the religious establishment.

Fear of repression is widespread due to the more or less repressive regimes in Asian countries. Emergency Rule entitles the security personnel to arrest and detain persons for a long time without trial. Even inquiries into disappearances, torture and deaths do not take place in an impartial manner. The more conscious youth ask: what are the religious establishments doing concerning these? How relevant is the ministry of the parishes to their needs?

The condition and thinking of *women* is fast changing due to the impact of transformations in the economy with the Free Trade Zones, labour migration, tourism. With these the culture of the family is also changing, with mothers being often out of the homes. All these are a serious challenge to the parish life.

Women who are becoming more conscious of their rights as Christians are also becoming skeptical about expecting justice within the Church. The Catholic Church seems to be the last major social institution to respond to the right of women to equality in gender relationships. In this respect too the development of thinking is rather backward within the Church, beginning with the absence of studies in feminist theology in the seminaries. The

Church must, at least, pay attention to the growing consciousness among women. With the widespread impact of mass media and the communications and sexual revolutions they will not be long unaware of and passive concerning their rights in Church and society.

Linking of Liberation Struggles of Peoples

The forces of exploitation are strongly entrenched in capitalistic societies. The hope for any significant change in the world situation lies in the understanding and organised effort among the peoples of goodwill in the different continents of the world. This should lead to an effort in the same direction. This is not easy as our experiences and aspirations are different. Very many of the people of good will in the rich countries do not know the problems and dire conditions of life of the poor in the poor countries. In a sense seeing some violence and starvation on the television screen every day may have the effect of habituating these persons to accepting these things as normal. Or they feel a sense of helplessness before the enormity of the problem. Some may think the issues are far away and unconnected with their lives. Still others may think they are already doing something through their normal church activities.

The demands of justice by one group may seem a threat to the life style and rights of others. The hope for the world lies in a linking together of the numerous persons and groups within countries and at a world level. There should be a realization that our common future is at stake. It is also the price of our safeguarding and developing our own personal authenticity and humanity. The people of the affluent countries, especially their youth, can consider that they have received much from nature, history and the world system. They are giving little in return; whereas the poor risk everything in the struggle for existence itself. *The civilizing of the affluent* depends on their ceasing to participate in the exploiting mechanisms of the killer system and beginning to contest these in thought and action in order to build a more viable, just and peaceful social order.

A transformation of the world-society for justice and meaningful peace requires contestation of the evils of the dominant system. This will bring about a strong reaction from the powerful

of the day. Many will have to suffer for justice's sake. This is already happening in the poor countries. When there are martyrs in Europe and North America for justice and a more human world, there will be more hope for persons in the poor countries, as well for genuine humane persons in the West.

Global People's Movements: We need of global coalitions; we cannot struggle alone. We need global networks. The oppressed are everywhere, oppressors too are everywhere. Globalization of struggle will be a new stage in the human story. Needed: networking of NGOs, to call your governments to accountability for the actions of the Bretton Woods Institutions: WB, IMF and GATT.

Centre for Society and Religion
Colombo 10
Sri Lanka

Tissa Balasuriya

Towards a Humane Community:

Village Level Efforts in the Context of Economic Liberalization

India was pursuing, since independence, an economic policy of centralized planning, aimed at a distribution-oriented and social change pattern of development. But it has only made the rich richer and the poor poorer. It was against this background that the Government of India initiated, since 1991, the New Economic Policy in compliance with the dictates of the World Bank and the IMF. Yet from available trends and indications we can in no way expect that it will ensure genuine democratization and equitable distribution. Hence the need for a "third way" that integrates economic growth with social justice. In this article the author proposes the experiment at Kalliassery, a village in Kerala, as a genuine attempt at village self-sufficiency and people's empowerment.

I

There is a story ascribed to Mao tse-tung. A Chinese farmer found two large mountains preventing the flow of much-wanted water into his farm. Without losing hope he took a pickaxe and started chipping away the mountains. His neighbours ridiculed him and his thoroughly unequal task. But eventually God took pity on the farmer, descended upon the earth and removed the mountains. According to Mao, the Chinese people were also engaged in a similar unequal task; of removing two mountains — feudalism and colonialism. For him there was no doubt that God will come down and help remove the mountains. But who is the God who will help the struggling Chinese people? Mao pointed out that God cannot be any other than the mass initiative of the Chinese people themselves.

Here is an account of a village-level community effort which conforms closely to the unequal struggle described in the story ascribed to Mao. This is the story of an effort of a village community undertaken within the framework of a Panchayath in India.

Such an effort can eventually be part of a mass initiative at the national or at least at the regional level as idealized in the former story. Yet, now it is confined to local level. As it is, it adds to the poignancy of the unequalness of the forces portrayed. To contextualize the effort, the regional, national and international situations have to be presented first.

II

With the 1991 Budget Speech of the Finance Minister, the Government of India initiated a series of Economic Reforms [ERs] which are identified together as the New Economic Policy [NEP]. The goals of the Reforms are well summarized by an official document released by the Ministry of Finance.¹

"The fundamental objective ... is to bring about rapid and sustained improvement in the quality of life of the people of India. Central to this goal is the rapid growth in incomes and productive employment ... Such growth requires investment ... And this investment must be productive. Successful and sustained development depends on continuing increases in the productivity of our capital, our land and our labour". [It further says that] "Decades of development experience in dozens of countries show that a good economic environment combines the discipline of competitive markets with efficient provision of key public services ... Consumers gain from choice. And producers [public or private] are most productive when exposed to competition".

International financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund [IMF] and the World Bank [WB] were advising the third world countries to adopt similar policy initiatives under programmes of liberalisation, stabilisation, globalisation and structural adjustment. *The World Development Report 1991*² pointed out that "competitive markets are the best way yet found for efficiently organizing the production and distribution of goods and services". India was late in accepting such advice, though from 1985, under the administration of late Rajiv Gandhi, some of these

1 'Economic Reforms, Two Years After and the Task Ahead', Discussion Paper, Government of India [GoI], Ministry of Finance, Department of Economic Affairs, 1993, p. 1.

2 World Bank, *World Development Report 1991, The Challenge of Development*, Oxford University Press [OUP], Oxford etc. 1991, p. 1.

measures were initially adopted. In 1991 we were apparently driven to accept them in toto by a deteriorating balance of payments situation, a major foreign exchange deficit and the ensuing run on the country's credibility in international market. Much of the blame for such adversities were attributed to the earlier economic policy framework, known widely as the Nehru-Mahalanobis model (NMM). This model stressed central planning, public control of the 'leading heights of the economy', industrial licensing and import substitution based industrialization.

One can argue that successive governments, closely and not-so-closely identified with the NMM, were equally responsible for the immediate and not so immediate causative developments which led to the so-called crisis of 1991. The original scheme of redistribution of assets in the rural economy — that of cultivated and cultivable land - which could have created a home market for manufactured goods, (and therefore imperative for the NMM) got defeated when comprehensive land reforms did not take place in most of the Indian states. One may also point out many other points of further deviation from the original model. Nevertheless, the fact remains that in spite of 'forty years' of the NMM, the basic purpose of income redistribution itself could not be realised, proven by the fact that well over 30 percent of the Indian population are still living under the poverty line.³ In other words, the NMM had already outlived whatever usefulness - if any - that it had. By 1990 Indian economic development was gird-locked into benefiting only the big industrialists, land-owners, and organised sector employees.⁴ One curious effect of the failure of the NMM is that all those who are against NEP, including the

3 *Economic Times*, 8th July 1992; and also L. R. Jain and Suresh D. Tendulkar, "Economic Reforms and the Poor", *Business Standard*, June 6, 1995, p. 10. The authors acknowledge sharp increase particularly in rural poverty in the post reform period. But they have pointed out that reform related decision contributed only indirectly to it. Whether it be indirect or direct the fact remains that mass poverty has persisted in India in both pre-reform and post reform periods. This situation reduces the credibility of any official economic programme among the poor.

4 See Sudipto Mundle, "The Political Economy of Reform", *Current Policy Issues*, No. 20, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, N. Delhi, 1992. Also, see Pranab Bardhan, *Political Economy of Development in India*, OUP, Delhi, 1994.

Communists (who were particularly strident in their criticism of the NMM and/or its implementation)⁵ are held responsible for the model.

III

The Ministry of Finance's document referred to earlier⁶ itself has pointed out this failure, "Within a generation, the countries of East Asia have transformed themselves. China, Indonesia, Korea, Thailand and Malaysia today have living standards much above ours. The proportion of poor in these countries has declined from 40 per cent and higher in the early 1960s to below 10 per cent". But political systems existing in these countries differ from the system in India. Democracy can be identified as "a nation with regular, free competitive (multiparty) elections".⁷ It can also be identified by focusing upon "the amount of civil and economic liberties available to the population". The degree of democratization can be measured by a minimalist / formalist matrix; the minimalist definition based on "regular electoral competitions, usually in a multiparty political system, and thus governmental succession by constitutional, electoral procedures, guaranteeing the rule of law" and the formalist or maximalist socio-economic definition based upon "criteria such as redistributive socio-economic reforms, broadened popular participation, social justice, and human rights".⁸ By any of these definitions or measurements the East Asian countries mentioned above cannot be termed fully democratic. This is not to deny that in that region there is a trend toward political liberalisation which can be defined as "a process of political change controlled from the top down, as a means of preserving most of the status quo"⁹ - rather than democratization.

5 See for instance, works of leading Communist thinkers like E. M. S. Nampoothiripad, For example his *Conflicts and Crisis, Political India: 1974*, Orient Longman Ltd., Bombay etc. 1974, Ch. 19. and *Indian Planning in Crisis*, Chintha Publication, Trivandrum, 1974.

6 'Economic Reforms ...', Ministry of Finance, op. cit., p. 2.

7 Alberto Alesina and Roberto Perotti, "The Political Economy of Growth: A Critical Survey of the Recent Literature", *The World Bank Economic Review*, Vol. 8, No. 3, September, 1994, p. 352.

8 Shadid Quadir, Christopher Clapham and Barry Gills, "Sustainable Democracy: Formalism Vs Subsistence", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1993, p. 416.

9 *Ibid.*

Even the premises of the soft authoritarian rule found in the region seems to be on the way out. Economic success in the already successful New Industrializing Countries (NICs) like South Korea and Taiwan might have played a role in that.¹⁰ But the question remains about the role of authoritarianism in their earlier economic development. East Asian countries including Japan were able to create a home market for manufactured production by internal income redistribution through fairly comprehensive land reforms. At least one study on the subject points out¹¹ the importance of a development state in East Asia with a high degree of relative autonomy from local classes and class fractions. It is this type of the State which got "authoritarianized" and proceeded to achieve development goals. While East Asian states have done well in terms of economic development, Latin American countries which also had high degree of authoritarianism have not done so well. In other words, authoritarianism by itself cannot guarantee development. Meanwhile, in a country like India where with all its defects a democratic system exists, a state "free" from local classes or class fractions is still in the realms of myth.

In India, the need is for more of the criteria spelt out in the context of the formal or maximalist version of democracy. With the existence of multi-party electoral process, conflicting interests are likely to clash with each other. In this respect the role of nation state in economic reform becomes important. Real democratization means a shift in the basis of State power from dominant elites who have an interest in the preservation of the state, "to popular forces for whom the national state must serve both as a focus for their own identities, and as a source of basic material needs".¹² At the earlier stage of such genuine

10 Ibid., p. 419.

11 Rhy Jenkins, "The political economy of Industrialisation: A Comparison of Latin American and East Asian Newly Industrialising Countries", *Development and Change*, Vol. 22, No. 2, April 1991, pp. 197-232; argues the superior industrial performance of the East Asian NICs lie in the ability of the state to direct the accumulation process in the direction which is required by capitalist development at particular points in time. This according to Jenkins has to be located in the existence of a developmental state with a high degree of relative autonomy from local classes and class fractions.

12 Shabid Quadir, et. al., op. cit., p. 417.

democratisation there could be slow growth and high political instability, caused by the virtual explosion of social demands repressed so far. It will invite pressure to accommodate conflicting demands, for regaining stability, which is more important than the nature of the political regime,¹³ resulting in the reversal of the very democratisation process. Another study has pointed out that,¹⁴ "Adjustment programmes, however well designed in a technical economic sense, are often politically difficult to launch, and, once launched, to keep afloat. Success in implementing an adjustment programme may depend on a government's skill in generating political support and holding off the opposition". In a polity where traditional elites still hold high influence, and where plurality of complex and sometimes conflicting interests prevail, the reforming state, irrespective of the interests of the individual economic reformers, can resort to even primordial passions, including communalism, to split the opposition forces.

The Ministry of Finance's document referred to earlier says so about the social costs of reform.¹⁵

Structural reform of the type elaborated above involves social costs ... social costs may arise for several reasons. In the first place, fiscal discipline forces limits on Government spending and this may affect the pace of implementation of programmes in the social sector which are especially critical for the well being of the poorer sections. Economic restructuring may also involve temporary loss of jobs in certain sick and unrevivable units as labour is redeployed into other expanding or new units. While total employment may well increase in the process, it is necessary to ensure that the hardship imposed on any section of labour as a result of restructuring is minimised. Government has recognized the need to create a social safety net for this purpose.

These points are discussed by the dogma of "market friendly", structurally adjusted economy, in terms of "undesired

13 Alberto Alesina and Roberto Perotti, op. cit., p. 359.

14 Stephan Haggard and Steven B. Webb, "What do we know about the Political Economy of Economy Policy Reform?", *The World Bank Research Observer*, Vol. 8, No. 2, July 1993, pp. 143-168.

15 'Economic Reforms ...', Ministry of Finance, op. cit., p. 19.

side effects''; not to be seen as part of the economic model, but as part of the social sector. The ensuing social costs are to be balanced against the economic benefits of macro-economic stabilization.¹⁶ The logic of the argument is devastating. But in the 'fictitious' short-run, at least, these problems are likely to loom large over those who lack in endowment or ownership entitlement and the capabilities these entitlements generate.¹⁷ The New Economic Programme does not have any economic solution to these problems, except the safety net. Since it is to be implemented by 'the public', power relations that already exist between groups and/or classes in society become crucial in determining the trend of implementation. Empirical evidences from recent Indian Budgets are far from conclusive, either way. Since the sections that are likely to be affected by these problems, in aggregate terms, are unlikely to be small, they cannot be wished away, either.

IV

The possibility of the NEP leading to genuine democratization or of reaching the poorer sections of the society cannot be ensured on the basis of available trends and indications. One could argue that neither can the reverse be taken for granted. But, it is not surprising that the poorer sections will be operating under widespread fear of the possible adverse impact of the NEP. Even highly localised trends of inflation, unemployment or shrinking incomes can scare them. This is understandable because, forty years of the N-MM, which promised them many things, left them unempowered and unendowed. Therefore, it is natural that they

16 M. A. Oommen, 'Economics, Economy and the Market Friendly Paradigm' *ISS Discussion Papers*, Institute of Social Science, N. Delhi, 192, pp. 20-21.

17 Details of this position that is the relative deprivation of persons with low level of endowments, see, Aamartya K. Sen, *Resources, Values and Development*, Oxford, 1984. Raja Chelliah, prominent in policy making of Indian Economic Reforms, in a recent interview [''A deficit of will'' *The Week*, Vol. 13, No. 25, June 11, 1995, p. 50] has admitted the following: ''Judging economic reforms in a short-term basis would be incorrect. At present the reforms may be benefiting only the upper class. When the exchange rate is reduced, it seems to benefit only the producer of the goods, not the masses. But it is only for a short-period''. It is this short term that matter for the poor. To argue that it can be overlooked is a false argument and hence the adjective of ''fictitious'' short run.

will not trust a new policy-package which, apart from the conditional social security net, promises in the long run, only indirect benefits from percolation of other people's gains.

Apart from this adverse socio-psychological background, the regional impact of the economic reforms are also to be taken into account. The State of Kerala, from where the village level community effort is to be reported, is a region which is likely to face some peculiar problems in implementation of the reforms. These stem from the historical evolution of a different development experience in this region, which was based upon people's mobilization and favourable state intervention, for over a century.¹⁸ This pattern has resulted in a wide dissemination of quality of life indicators,¹⁹ particularly literacy, basic education²⁰ and health.²¹ In this, the component of public investment, in terms of direct investment, building up of infrastructure and subsidies are very high. But these are the components which are very much likely to suffer under the dictates of financial discipline advocated by the NEP.

On the one hand, the dissemination of earlier developmental benefits was not perfect, as there are still social groups who have been bypassed. Further, the gains made already had to be maintained. On the other hand Kerala economy had a slow rate of growth. This was particularly noticed in agriculture from the mid 1970's,²² and the industrial sector was left out of the major

18 See P. K. Michael Tharakan, "Socio-Religious Reform Movements and Demand for Indications of Development: Thiruvithamkoor 1869-1930", In Alok Bhalla and Peter J Bunke (eds) *Images of Rural India in the 20th Century*, Sterling Pub. Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1992, pp. 134-152.

19 See "India", Development Papers No. 16, *Human Resources Development: Effectiveness of Programme Delivery at the Local Level in Countries of the ESCAP Region*, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, 1994, pp. 101-127 [Original draft prepared by P. K. Michael Tharakan].

20 P. K. Michael Tharakan, "Socio-Economic Factors in Educational Development: Case of Nineteenth Century Travancore", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 19, Nos. 45 and 46, November 10 and 17, 1984, pp. 1913-1928, 1959-1967.

21 P. G. K. Panikar and C. R. Soman, *Health Status of Kerala, The Paradox of Economic Backwardness and Health Development*, CDS, Thiruvananthapuram, 1984.

22 K. P. Kannan and K. Pushpangadan, "Agricultural Stagnation in Kerala: An Exploratory Analysis", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 23, No. 39, A 120-A 128.

growth in Indian industry since 1983.²³ In this context, one might hypothesize about the limits of people's mobilization and distribution oriented and social change pattern of development, and suggest economic growth as the source for further development. But the earlier pattern has stood the region in good stead,²⁴ and it has been argued that even the recent sharp decline in the incidence of rural poverty was mainly due to the social protection expressed in terms of meeting the basic consumption requirements of the poor, especially those vulnerable among the poor.²⁵

The option dictated by the NEP adopted by the Government of India is to follow a growth strategy for regional development. But if a strategy of economic growth is adopted in neglect of the earlier social development, it will result in widespread dislocations in an economy used to high government interventions. Naturally, in this context, a "third way" which integrates growth and social development seems to be the one most feasible. But it is easier said than done. With the increasing pressures to follow the policy options dictated by the NEP, Kerala is caught in a difficult situation, in which very careful steps have to be taken, because each of them will have long term implications.

V

This is the context in which the story ascribed to Mao makes sense. People in Kerala, as anywhere else in India and the third

23 R. Venkatesan, *Problem in the Implementation of Economic Reforms at the State Level*, NCAER, N. Delhi, 1994, pp. 24-26.

24 A Study on Sri Lanka a country similar to Kerala [S. R. Osmani, "Is there a Conflict between Growth and Welfarism? The Significance of the Sri Lanka Debate", *Development and Change*, Vol. 25, No. 2, April 1984, pp. 387-421.] has pointed out that "the general lesson that one can draw from Sri Lanka's experience is that even a poor country can bring out rapid improvement in the living standards of its people by adopting a judiciously designed welfarist strategy, and further that the pursuit of rapid gains in the manner need not involve a conflict with growth and hence need not entail a loss of welfare in the long term. But there is another dimension of the Sri Lankan experience which offers no less valuable a lesson. It shows how important it is to maintain a satisfactory rate of economic growth for the sake of welfarism itself; if, for whatever reason, growth remains sluggish, it might spell disaster for the welfarist strategy".

25 K. P. Kannan, "Public Intervention and Poverty Alleviation, A Study of the Declining incidence of rural poverty in Kerala, India", Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, 1995.

world — and in circumstances explained above, particularly in this region — have to literally move mountains. Even small steps taken in this direction are to be considered seriously. One such effort is the experiment being tried out in the Kalliasseri Panchayath in Kannur District.²⁶ The political tradition of the state is of mass organisations focusing largely on equity in distribution. They have had relative success in winning their demands and in improving the living conditions of the common people. In this context the question whether the organized strength of these movements and the democratic consciousness that they have generated can be utilized to accelerate the economic growth has assumed critical importance.

The effectiveness of participatory development in this context was realised at least in the case of specific development sectors such as small scale and cottage industries, fisheries, animal husbandry etc. At a larger context this also implied that the decentralization of governments and development planning is a precondition for the realisation of this untapped growth potential. This is because the needs of the people, the resources, the ecological setting, the social milieu and traditional knowledge of the people are all local specific. Though there was such an awareness, efforts at the local level to build up capability was not well attended to at the regional and national levels. The Kerala Sastra Sahithya Parishath [KSSP] a people's science movement, in recent years took up a campaign on Kerala's development, focussing on decentralization. This campaign brought out that the local bodies had very little power to plan or execute any development programme and that the necessary comprehensive data base of the land, water and human resources were not readily available. Reflections on these shortcomings resulted in the realisation that every panchayath has to develop local database as well as expertise to handle information. In addition, the traditional knowledge of the villagers have to be combined with modern science and technology in drawing up plans of development, and the latent cooperative and creative instincts of the people

26 Most of the descriptive material that follow, including quotes and paraphrasing are taken from the *Kalliasserry Experiment Draft Outline*, IRTC, Palakkad, CESS, Thiruvananthapuram, KVS, Kalliasserry, 1994. But what is taken for use in this paper are facts which I could verify on three field visits over three years.

have to be reawakened. The Panchayath Level Resource Mapping Programme [PLRMP] or People's Resource Mapping Programme [PRMP], developed as an experiment addressing the issues raised above.

A series of discussions involving scientists from Centre for Earth Science Studies [CESS], State Land Use Board, and activists of the KSSP led in 1991, to a stage where the experiments were ready for expanding to a wider geographical area. Meanwhile the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India [DST, GOI], agreed to fund the project to cover 25 panchayaths to be carried out as a formal collaborative project of CESS and KSSP.²⁷ Kalliasseri was one of the 25 panchayaths selected for the project and the first one to be taken up for mapping. The mapping programme was started in Kalliasseri in March 1991. The Resource Survey itself had 5 components. They included training of volunteers for land use and asset mapping, mapping of land use and local assets by trained volunteers, land and water resource mapping by scientific and technical personnel, collection of data, finalisation of maps and interpretation by scientific personnel, and data storage and developing information system. The final resource maps for Kalliasseri were ready by June 1991 and the drawing up of an action programme was started soon. It was realised in this process that making an integrated plan from the environmental appraisal maps will require socio-economic data regarding households. A major component — that of socio-economic survey of households — was added and it was completed by January 1992. Broad sectoral plans were drawn up in June 1992. For this more detailed information was found to be necessary and for that investigations were carried out with regard to the following: (1) demand survey for vegetables and eggs; (2) educational institutions survey; (3) survey and mapping of drainage channels in the panchayaths; (4) power line mapping survey of distribution system in 28 transformer areas; (5) total energy survey; and (6) engineering survey of 50 hectares of marshy land for aquaculture. In other words, in Kalliasseri the project moved from the stage of data collection and interpretation to the stage of formulation of a comprehensive village plan.

27 Originally meant for 13 Panchayaths of 5 from each geographical regions of Kerala which was subsequently raised to 25 panchayaths. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

Kalliasseri was in the forefront of the mass movement for agrarian reforms which led to comprehensive land reforms in the whole State between 1957 and 1971; and which changed the agrarian relations and cultural and material well being in the village as elsewhere. Along with these, there were exogenous developments, like out-migration to the Persian Gulf region and the growth of a modern small scale industrial sector. This resulted in the major proportion of non-agricultural income being originated from outside the village; while the agricultural production and productivity even in comparison with Kerala standards remained low. In other words Kalliasseri failed to provide even the minimum requirement of village based sustainability. While this locality has done fairly well in education and health sectors, there was declining quality of even these services. Growing unemployment and persisting gender inequality are further problems that this village has to face. Though village self sufficiency is not a target to be aspired for in the contemporary context of market integration, each village could aim for greatest utilisation of its own internal growth potential. The main problem that was faced in the development of Kalliasseri was the absence of this dimension.

This problem was faced squarely in each of the sub-sector-data collection, its interpretation and in framing action plans. The draft status report and action programme which was drawn up by June 1992 was decided to be placed before an assembly of people of the village. Invitation to this assembly was delivered to each of the household. An exhibition of maps, presentation of the draft programme and modification of proposals etc. were done at the assembly and a development committee was formed. Since the Panchayath had no power to take loans, to make collections or to make investments in productive sectors, a separate development agency within the Panchayath named the Kalliasseri Development Society was registered under Charitable Societies Act in June 1993. The general body of the society [*Jana Sabha*] was to consist of an elected representative for every 25 households in the panchayath, panchayath samithi members and government officials directly connected with development programmes in the Panchayath. The two hundred member general body has a working committee and eight sub committees. The *Jana Sabha* members of each ward under the chairmanship of the panchayath ward member constituted the ward development council. The first elections to the development

council took place in December 1993. The entire households in the panchayath were divided into 173 groups of 25 households each. The group meetings were held either in one of the houses or a public place; with each adult member having the right to participate and vote. Only in six instances did voting become necessary.

Though a comprehensive action programme was the aim and deliberations towards it continued, the delay involved in framing the same led to taking up some of the individual schemes proposed. The schemes which are in the process of being implemented are: (1) Vegetable Cultivation Scheme (2) Floriculture (3) Desilting of Kandanchira Canal (4) Construction of Cross bars (5) Soil Conservation Programme (6) Tank Fishery Scheme (7) Kalliasseri Total Energy Programme (8) Panchayath School Complex and (9) Integrated Health Programme. Each of these schemes are worth discussing in greater detail but restrictions of time and space forbid it. The Panchayat School complex "perhaps... one experiment that has had the most wide impact outside the panchayath"²⁸ nevertheless require special mention. An analysis of enrollment in all schools of the Panchayat indicates steady decline. Part of it may be due to declining birth rate. Migration to schools considered better in neighbouring panchayats and to English medium aided schools is another factor. While Kalliasseri government high school seems to have been affected by the latter phenomenon, a particular lower primary school in the area has turned 'uneconomic' by drastic fall in enrollment. Generally speaking the state of basic amenities in the 11 schools of the Panchayat is deplorable. Only three schools have electricity. Most of the schools do not have kitchens, latrines or staff rooms. Playground, audio visual facilities etc. are also mostly absent. The quality of education imparted in these schools is also found wanting. A preliminary study conducted in January 1993 indicates that 25 to 30 per cent of the children in third and fourth standards have not acquired even the minimum learning levels in language supposed to be imparted in the first and second standards. The standard of instruction in upper primary and high school classes must also be of a low standard as evident in the high level of failure in the Secondary School Leaving Certificate Examination.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 108.

It is in these circumstances, which in many other parts of Kerala have led to writing off of the public school system as irredeemable, that in Kalliasseri, a comprehensive intervention for improvement of the quality of instruction and for bettering basic facilities, with community participation was envisaged. The Kalliasseri Panchayat School Complex covering 10 feeder schools and the high school was initiated in the academic year of 1993-94. Even before that a similar school complex programme was initiated in Sivapuram, again in Kannur district. Both these programmes were promoted by the Kannur District Council, the earlier decentralised administrative unit, as long as it lasted. What is aimed to be achieved under the programme are the following: (1) to improve academic activity in the schools using the existing school environment; (2) to explore the feasibility of exchange of ideas among teachers of different schools; (3) to improve teaching methods and thereby make the learning activities inside and outside the classrooms more effective; (4) to develop better interaction between educational institutions and the community at large; (5) to trigger off interest of parents in their children's school life; (6) to give opportunities for teachers' innovations and experimental methods of teaching; (7) to share reference books and teaching aids and other infrastructural facilities in better off schools with other schools; and (8) to make no-cost or low-cost teaching aids. To achieve these, complex committees for each school and "Mothers Committees" for each class are organised. Training programmes to make teaching more effective and enjoyable are undertaken. New teaching aids, commonly set question papers, and practical texts are provided for all schools.

What is significant about this experiment is that when the nationally set economic policies are prone to discourage expenditure for improvement or even maintenance of public school system; and while there is a growing belief that private investment in education is the only way out, here is a village community, from mothers of children onwards are collectively trying to "rescue" the only school system that they can afford, from "inevitable" doom. The same kind of spirit and determination is seen in other schemes under implementation. Ward Committees organised 23 groups of 10 to 20 unemployed youth of which three were of women alone, to take up vegetable cultivation in 12 hectares of fallow paddy land. To make these lands, privately owned, available

for cultivation, sponsoring agencies and panchayat members effectively intermediated. Similarly the desilting of the 16 km long drainage cum irrigation channel was done with the help of the labour of 742 volunteers. They getting together for such a project itself was a major event which galvanized the entire village. The good result of their work—which could not be done by the centralized minor irrigation department—was evident during the monsoons when the smooth flow of water prevented annual flooding. In other words, the people of Kalliasseri are gradually coming to appreciate the logic of these organised "self-help" projects and are offering cooperation. In the meanwhile they retain their right to criticise if necessary. Whenever problems like in the vegetable cultivation scheme, the promised irrigation facilities were not made available, or when sufficient thought had not gone into the marketing of the products, they were pointed out and discussed self-critically at ward committee meetings. In short people's participation and genuine democratization are processes that are alive and kicking in Kalliasseri.

VI

It is not argued that the people of Kalliasseri are consciously moving mountains. But they are doing it perhaps unconsciously. The persuasion of the prevailing policy regime is against them. The option that was available—the NMM—is proved to be irrelevant. The decentralised "self-help" schemes came through an officially sponsored programme of scientific mapping of resources with popular participation. This could have remained as another official programme. But the people of Kalliasseri saw some positive aspects in it and internalized it and made it their own programme. Neither decentralised decision-making nor self-help programmes were entirely new to them. They were inheritors of the traditions of Gandhian principles of national movement and the socialist principles of the communist movement; both at one time or other. The entirely new factor was the scientific assessment of resources, in which people of the village themselves were invited to participate, not by people from elsewhere, but local activists of the sponsoring agencies—and much credit has to go to these persons. The people of Kalliasseri readily agreed to do so.

Both the "official" nature of the programme and the intermediation of the elected Panchayat Samiti are likely to be factors that made it acceptable to the people. Politically people of Kalliasseri are not so polarised as elsewhere in Kerala. This could also be a point of advantage. But above all these, there is a spark of genuine interest among the majority of the people of the Panchayat. One cannot put one's finger upon the cause of that spark. Without much fanfare, the people of Kalliasseri are trying to solve some of their immediately perceived problems by rationally utilising resources, locally available. It is like the Biblical Story of Christ feeding five thousand persons with five loaves of bread and a few fish. With each one for himself or herself the crowd could not have fed themselves. But by sharing, they could "miraculously" feed the 'multitude' with what little food that they had with them.²⁹ Certainly something similar is happening in Kalliasseri.

Centre for Development Studies
Thiruvananthapuram — 695011

P. K. Michael Tharakan

29 See S. Kappen, "Table fellowship as Socialist Praxis", S. Kappen (ed.) *Jesus Today*, AIUCF, Madras, 1985, p. 146.

Our Daily Rice

In the context of world economy with its glaring imbalances and distortions and the serious social problems it is giving rise to, the New Testament perspectives and Jesus' own teaching on economic values are here considered and made to reflect on present-day situation. Life in all its forms is seen to be the central concern of Jesus who identifies himself as bread and life, thereby showing that economy has a Christ-dimension. It is in terms of life and its care that he understands himself as well as his mission. Only by living out Christ-economy in its newness shall one be a disciple of Christ and care for and share with others, especially the poor and suffering, and realize the Incarnation. The article concludes with relevant criticisms of Churches and capitalism.

Food is basic. We need it to be somebody. The physical education hall in many a school proclaims this truth with a poster: A Healthy Mind in a Healthy Body. Medieval monks used to say, Good Kitchen, Good Discipline. When Karl Marx said the same in different words, some people did not like it. He said that matter was basic to life and that the economy was central to human existence. We know he was right because we have continued over the years to insist on feeding children and on eating something ourselves. And at this moment we are preoccupied with the shape of world economy, with its inequalities, imbalances and distortions; with the policies of powerful international financial institutions and their secret implications for people's life and freedom; with the new economic policies and structural adjustments imposed on all of us and welcomed by some among us; with the ever-growing rich/poor divide and the way it stultifies national life and all our governments; with the massive poverty of our people, and with starvation deaths, especially of children. Food is basic. The Economy is central.

A. Some NT perspectives

The Scriptures have much to say about food, clothing and shelter, about lands and goods, buying and selling, measures and weights, honesty and justice, care for the poor and wealth-sharing. Scholars, however, assure us that

"the Scriptures do not present for our consideration or implementation any grand scheme for the proper disposition of possessions. There is no christian economic structure to be found in the Bible, ... The Bible does not ... propose a clear programme of social change. It does not even present one way of sharing possessions as uniquely appropriate."¹

Johnson is in agreement with Hengel whose study comes to the conclusion that

"We cannot extract a well-defined 'christian doctrine of property' either from the New Testament or from the history of the early church."²

The first christians

"cannot give us a practical programme of social ethics to solve the question of possessions, which has become so acute today as a result of industrialization." "... early christian ethics cannot provide us with any system of generally binding norms for today's society, nor does it set out to do so."³ Mullin concurs: "there is no single sufficient coherent christian teaching on wealth."⁴

But the Bible gives us enough, more than enough, of perspectives and principles, of horizons and visions, of values and orientations by which life as a whole, economic life not exempted, is to be inspired, shaped and governed. There are the directions and horizons provided by faith in the One Creator of the world, in the one God who is everybody's loving Parent, in humanity as God's household, in God's call to share even as God shares, in the divine offer of the Kingdom to the poor and in the meaning of the Eucharistic Meal. Johnson therefore adds that

"the scriptures, read as normative ..., challenge us to express our faith in God by sharing our possessions. Such sharing indeed is a mandate of faith, for clinging to what one

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- 1 Luke T. Johnson, *Sharing Possessions, Mandate and Symbol of Faith*, Fortress, Press, Philadelphia, 1981, p. 115.
 - 2 Martin Hengel, *Property and Riches in the Early Church in Early Christianity* SCM, London, 1974/1979, p. 84.
 - 3 Ibid., p. 41, 85.
 - 4 Redmond Mullin, *The Wealth of Christians, A Study of How Christians have Dealt with the Question of Riches through history — with implications and applications for our times*, Orbis, N. Y., 1984, p. 11.

has is incompatible with faith in God and (is) an expression of idolatry."⁵

Hengel calls attention to the fact that in Jesus' preaching (and praxis) we find a "radical criticism of property as well as a free (positive) attitude to it". We should not be in a hurry to simplify this find "and rob it of its acuteness", say

"by explaining that property was legitimised by Jesus as something entrusted to men by the Creator ... Jesus only fights against its abuse. This favorite interpretation of property as a loan entrusted by God ... is certainly found in the preaching of Jesus ... but it is not of central significance. Nor is it a specifically christian idea."⁶

The key to a correct understanding of Jesus' attitude to property is his message of the coming Kingdom of God

"which ... stands ... under (the sign) of the all-victorious love of God. Because men experience forgiveness ... they themselves can forgive; because God's goodness supports and sustains their life, they must no longer fret about their everyday needs ..."⁷

Those who have tasted in their hearts the love which God pours into them will be glad to care and share. John wrote in his first letter: "If one has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" (1 Jn 3: 17)

Hengel comments:

"... we have here a basic theme of early christian ethics which has its roots in Judaism, though its real point comes through its application to the love of God in the Person and work of Christ (Jn 3: 16; 17: 26; 1 Jn 4: 7ff). In the end, the appeal to God as the giver of all good gifts and the theme of the imitation of God in early christianity must be seen from the perspective of Christology."⁸

P. H. Davids discovers in the Synoptics "a consistent picture of Jesus' attitude towards wealth and poverty". Wealth is not safe. It is dangerous. It could become Mammon, idol, and, like

⁵ Luke T. Johnson, op. cit., p. 138.

⁶ Hengel, op. cit., p. 26-29.

⁷ Ibid., p. 29-30.

⁸ Ibid., p. 69.

Satan, seductively draw people away from God. Mark refers to the deceit or lure of wealth which, like thorns, chokes the Word as it begins to sprout in the heart (Mk 4: 19). God and Mammon exclude each other (Mt 6: 24; Lk 16: 13). That is why the future of the rich is woe, and their salvation impossible except through a miracle of grace (Lk 6: 24f; 18: 18-27; 19: 1-10). God has, on the other hand, a special interest in and care for the poor. "The only healthy use of wealth is in the care of the poor." Investing in them is investing in heaven, which is the only safe and lasting investment. For the rest Jesus calls for radical trust in God. That is the basis for the ability to give up wealth and focus on work for God's Kingdom and God's justice. Davids observes that:

"Within the modern western individualism, much of what (Jesus) taught on wealth and poverty appears to be nonsense. But given that his followers assumed that Jesus was correct in his teaching that the Kingdom of God had come, it made good sense."⁹

Schottroff and Stegemann are sure that Luke/Luke's Jesus envisaged a "concrete social utopia" in which property was "to be distributed equally among the prosperous and the needy christians of the community". They hold that "this is suggested by the idea of a man renouncing half of his possessions" (Lk 19:1-10). Luke's model here could well be the Baptist's call (Lk 3:10-14) to the poor to be solidary with the poor.¹⁰ Still, Luke is the evangelist not so much of the poor as of the rich; for

"At the centre of the social message of Jesus in Luke are the instructions given to the rich and respectful. The case of Zachaeus gives them an example to be followed. The duty of the prosperous is not to gather treasure for themselves, but to become rich in God's sight, that is, to be charitable and take the side of the weak... (Luke) is an exceptionally keen critic of the rich and wants their conversion, which

9 P. H. Davids, "Rich and Poor" in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. by Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight and I. Howard Marshall, Intervarsity Press, Dowers Grove, Ill., and Leicester, England, 1992, p. 705-708.

10 Cf., Luis Schottroff and Wolfgang Stegemann, *Jesus and Hope of the Poor*, Orbis, N. Y., 1986/1979, p. 107-108.

is possible only by way of radical renunciation (renunciation of half of their possessions)...¹¹

Of the disciples however is required complete renunciation and simple life. "Go, sell, give away, come, follow". This is not a reflection of the romantic ethical ideal of Greek and Roman literature. It is rather blunt up with the Person of Jesus and the poverty and *kenosis* that were integral to his mystery.

"This form of discipleship has for its irretrievable and unreproducible context the following of Jesus on the road to Jerusalem, and Luke nowhere isolates the discipleship from this special closeness to Jesus, nowhere gives it an independent meaning... As a matter of fact, the only reason for the disciples' complete renunciation of possessions in Luke is their extraordinary encounter with Jesus."¹²

Perhaps the very tensions which NT teachings on wealth create "may be the condition for authentically christian practice."¹³

B. The Bread of Life

Jesus called himself the Bread of Life; the true Bread; the Bread of God which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world (Jn 6:32-35). Take, eat, this is my Body, my Self he said (Mt 26: 26). He said: I am the living Bread; my flesh is real food, my blood is real drink; whoever eats me will draw life from me (Jn 6:51-57). The claim, the news, is that Jesus himself is the bread, the rice, the food, the basis of life. Life is his central concern. It is in terms of life and its nurture that he understands and identifies himself as well as his mission. I have come, he said, so that they (you) may have life and have it to the full (Jn 10:10). Once on a sabbath day in a synagogue, pointing to a man with a withered hand, Jesus asked: Is it permitted on the sabbath day... to save life...? To him the answer was obvious. The rule-makers however kept silent. That made Jesus sad and angry. He did save life and heal the man, risking the murderous hostility of those for whom the law (and the profits) were dearer than the life of the poor (Mk 3:1-6). As the Father gives life to the dead, so does the Son, said Jesus (Jn 5:21).

¹¹ Ibid., p. 116-117. ¹² Ibid., p. 81.

¹³ Mullin, op. cit., p. 213.

What life is Jesus referring to? Not only the life that is usually described as 'spiritual' and 'interior', but, life in all its forms and all levels of evolution and realization: material, biological, physical life; life of the mind and of the spirit; life of freedom and love and relationships; moral life; the life constituted by faith consisting in hope. The life of the wayside flower which Jesus sees as loved and clothed by God. The life of birds which Jesus recognizes as lovingly fed by the heavenly Father (Mt 6:26-30). The life of the women and men whom Jesus cared to heal with a word, with a touch and to feed: the hungry, the lepers, the crippled, the deaf and the blind. The life he restored when he raised two dead boys and gave them back, one to his widowed mother, and the other to his tearful sisters. The life that was rebuilt when a lost son returned and his father's prodigal love gave the boy a great welcome: 'your brother here was dead and has come to life.' Jesus affirmed that every believing person has already passed from death to life; and a disciple of his, John, asserted the same truth about all who love their brothers/sisters (Jn 5:24: 1 Jn 3:14). The new life constituted by faith-commitment to God in trust and obedience as well as by love for the needy, broken sister and brother. Jesus is the bread and support of all forms and levels of life that comes from God.

It is true that the creature does not live by bread or food alone; it is true also, and obvious, that it does not live without food either. Every creature exists and lives by the word of God, and breathes and acts by his Spirit. Jesus is the Word become Flesh become Bread. Of the Word, the Flesh is the sacrament, and of both, the sacrament is Bread. This Word-Flesh-Bread has been sent by the Father to feed the world and foster life. That is why Jesus was deeply moved at the sight of people harassed and dejected, left like sheep without a shepherd, destroyed by thieves and bandits and abandoned by hirelings (Mt 9:36; Jn 10:2-10). He would therefore lead his flock and bring them to rich pastures. After healing a dying girl who had been sick for long, Jesus told the child's parents to give her something to eat. When he saw a great crowd who had nothing to eat, he said: "I feel sorry for these people; they... have nothing to eat. If I send them off home hungry they will collapse on the way." To his disciples who advised dismissal of the crowd he said, you give them something to eat

yourselves (Mk 5:43; 6:35-44; 8:1-8). He himself loved to eat with outcasts and disreputable people. Food was for Jesus a sacrament of equality and friendship, and a shared meal, a place of recognition and honour. Food as basic for bodily life was foundational. That is why food is an apt symbol for Jesus, and in the end for God, the ultimate source and support of life.

Now bread/food is an economic reality: product of the earth and of human labor; something sold and bought in the market place. A political reality over which struggles develop, wars are fought, or treaties concluded. A socio-cultural reality expressing human values and concerns, relationships of respect and moods of joy and celebration. Giving himself as Bread Jesus is inextricably linking his person and mystery with the foundations of our life, with its material and economic roots. If Jesus is the Bread of life, and that affirmation is understood in all its depth and width, then bread has, the economy has, Christological dimensions; and the Christ reality has economic implications. The Incarnation is very real and present, and reaches to and touches every fibre of our being: *iśāvāsyam idam sarvam*: there is a Christology of the economic, and an economy of Christ.

C. Realizing the Incarnation

This Christ-dimension of the economy, which we first met in Hengel and again in Schottroff and Stegemann, has received fuller treatment in Mullin's hands. It will be helpful then to quote Mullin extensively. From the very start, Mullin insists that the solution to problems of injustice, poverty and divisions "must be of Christ, not of Marx or of Milton Friedman with the cross stuck as a broach on their lapels". Christians must "assert their integrity and... live out a distinctly christian ethic in their economic life", in their "economic behaviour and attitudes", in the ways they "earn, own and dispose of their wealth:"¹⁴

'What I am talking about is a work of grace, a true conversion in which Christians' realization of the Incarnation will include their economic behaviour and all dealings, in business or out of it, with their neighbour.'¹⁵

It is refreshing and challenging and most hope-giving to hear this from somebody who introduces himself as "a businessman, not

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 9, 10.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 10.

a theologian''¹⁶. His thesis even, precisely, as a christian businessman and fund-raiser, is that

''From the manifold of christian teaching and experience, the reality of the single incarnate Christ must be expressed through each of us, in our own present time.'' ¹⁷

Much of Jesus' teaching on alms, care for the suffering and the hungry, solidarity with the poor may be found in older traditions of Jews and others; except perhaps his attack on wealth and his option to be a *paraiah*, a *dalit*, an outcast (Lk 2:7; Mt 2:13, 16; Mk 2:15-17; 12:10; Lk 23:19-21; Hb 13:11-13). What is new emerges in Matthew 25:35-40: 'I was hungry, you gave me food; I was thirsty you gave me drink; I was naked, you clothed me; I was a stranger, you welcomed me... In so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me''. Elsewhere Jesus says, 'Whoever receives one of these children in my name... receives me; and whoever receives me, receives ... the One who sent me'' (Mk 9:37). Mullin comments:

''These are not figures of speech. They introduce the new dimension which transcends any ethical teaching; the claim that a follower of Jesus lives the life of Jesus, that very individual life is a further realization of the Incarnation, and that in all experience and contacts there is an encounter with Christ living, active and reaching out in the christian and in the people or events he encounters: 'He who abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit.''' (Jn 15:5)¹⁸

That is our Christology for here and now: that is our ecclesiology. The Incarnation is divine solidarity with the lowly, the oppressed and the suffering. It is among these we discern the hungry Christ and feed him; his naked Body and clothe him. Mullin continues:

''... it is Jesus who acts through a Christian's charity (justice) and it is Jesus who personally receives the charitable (just) act. Charity (justice) is the mutual and necessary expression of Jesus' presence in a Christian. He stands as benefactor and as beneficiary...''¹⁹

16 Ibid., p. 11.

17 Ibid., p. 12.

18 Ibid., p. 45.

19 Ibid., p. 178.

We allow space for a further, fuller word from Mullin on his cherished theme of christian life, economic life included, as an endlessly unfolding and all-enfolding realization of the Incarnation:

“What characterises and distinguishes a christian life, and therefore christian economic behaviour and charity, is the reality of the Incarnation. It is Christ who lives and works in the individual christian, and it is Christ whom the christian encounters in the people and events of daily life. This is not a fiction or game or charade. The substance of the history of the Incarnation is the substance of history itself. Nothing is left out. Christ is realized in society through its natural, historical, evolutionary, social, political, economic, intellectual and cultural processes... It means that in earning and handling wealth, in conducting business, in buying and selling, as in all other activities, christian life is led, not by observing a code of behaviour, but by realizing the contemporary life of Christ... the life of Christ is realized in any age through the living relationships of christians with all their fellow men, none excepted. This of course includes all categories of the needy, and Christ’s teaching gives special priority to the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, and others so deprived; but the encounter with Christ is also the conditioning factor and the true substance of all other relationships — with employers, employees, customers, clients, patients, officials, public servants, blood relations, friends and everyone a christian hears of or meets, no matter how remotely or casually”²⁰

What does this mean in practical terms? It means that

“experiences of economic success, drudgery, or calamity must be regarded as opportunities to develop the real life and presence of Christ in the world. This is true of individuals, groups, nations, and associations between nations.”²¹

In every experience we encounter Christ whose Incarnation we are fulfilling and to whom we expose our motives, purposes and deeds. Since we are speaking of economic activity, Mullin

20 Ibid., p. 179, cf. 219.

21 Ibid., p. 180.

points out the "humdrum issues to be exposed in this way". They include

"...the amount to be earned, the amount to be spent on necessities, the amount committed to pleasures, the sums dedicated to others, the time to be spent at work or with family, friends, the needy and others, the treatment of an inefficient employee or unjust employer, positive action to achieve social and political change, participation or abstention during an official strike. For a christian this cannot be a mechanical process, since personal relations with living Christ and with living, mortal fellows are involved. It cannot leave economic behaviour unchanged."²²

In this connection Mullin recalls Karl Barth's insistence on the revolutionary role of Christ. Barth argues that in the man Jesus a crisis broke on all human order, and that crisis was radical and comprehensive. The newness of Jesus penetrates "to the very foundations of economic life in defiance of every reasonable and to that extent honorable objection". Barth assures us that "we do not really know Jesus ...if we do not know him as this poor man, as this ... partisan of the poor, and finally as this revolutionary"²³.

That is why in matters economic christian "outlook and behaviour ought to be distinctive". There surely is an "attitude to earning, owning and disposing of wealth which is uniquely, specifically christian". Separation from the State now gives the Churches "a new freedom to assert their integrity and ... live out a distinctly christian ethic in their economic life". Christian life is characterised and distinguished by the reality of the Incarnation, and by the presence of Christ in all events, processes and persons, especially in the poor²⁴. The essential reality of the christian faith is described as "dangerous and necessarily unpopular"²⁵. "Christian radicalism has its origins in the Gospel and has been transmitted in a continuous line from Hermas, Chrysostom and Pelagius through Langland and the Lollards and the 17th century Puritans to the present day ... And in every

22 Ibid., p. 220-21.

23 Ibid., p. 212-213, quoting Barth, Church Dogmatics.

24 Ibid., p. 9, 10, 175, 179.

25 Ibid., p. 179.

case the followers did not so much compromise the teachings of the radicals as follow another inspiration than the one deriving from an exclusive loyalty to an exclusive Christ."²⁶ We need "to work towards a radical, christian programme for change". "A revolutionary lead must be given." Begin to think "radically, Christianly, constructively", and join those who "work for a radical transformation of our economic and political systems" or even for their overturning and replacement. An economic revolution must come even "as a direct response to the teaching of Christ". In fact "genuine christian change of economic attitudes and systems is not an option but an imperative". And "the christian prejudice need to be strongly in the direction of ... austerity and self-denial" and not profits and consumerism. "Christians should be conspicuous for their odd behaviour in their theoretical and practical rejection of the prevailing financial ideals."²⁷

D: Where do the churches stand?

Radical voices have been raised in the past and radical steps taken. They may still be heard and seen in our days. In his *Tools for Conviviality* (1973) Ivan Illich called for convivial reconstruction. Conviviality is the opposite of industrial production, and consists in autonomous and creative intercourse among persons. E. F. Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful* (1973) stressed the primacy of people over profit, and argued for intermediate technology which is simpler, cheaper and easier to maintain and therefore more intelligent and scientific. George McRobie shows, in his *Small is Possible* (1981), how growth of large scale industries have damaged people and life and how millions of people are beginning to opt for simple, low-consumption and socially cooperative life-styles. John V. Taylor, *Enough is Enough* (1977), calls for moderation in a consumer society and points to the emergence of christian cells and communities like Taize, Iona and L'Arche, based on proved insights of traditional monasticism. Then there are the Liberation Theologians and the Greens who have pointed in a different direction from industrial capitalism's oppression and exploitation of people and pollution and waste of nature to make a few men super-rich. There is the remarkable Scott Bader Commonwealth; an experiment in corporate ownership and philanthropy, born of Ernest Bader's

26 Ibid., p. 204.

27 Ibid., p. 215, 216, 219, 222, 218.

gift (1951) of his successful company to his workers. Schumacher observes that "Scott Bader — and a few others — remain as small islands of sanity in a large society ruled by greed and envy"²⁸. It is the fruit of what Bader himself describes as

"...many years of effort to establish the Christian way of life in our business... it has brought us good results in our relations with one another, as well as in the quality and quantity of our production. Now we wish to press on and consummate what we have so far achieved, making a concrete contribution toward a better society in the service of God and our fellowmen."²⁹

These are individual voices and small steps. The churches themselves have rarely been radical. Their sympathies and loyalties seem to be with the established capitalist order, even when they criticise its excesses. In general the papal encyclicals promote the preservation of the existing social order, and sees charity as the answer to the problems of the impoverished, though Pope Leo's *Rerum Novarum* was subversive in its advocacy of free labour unions and their right to strike work for just reasons. The encyclicals fail radically to question the capitalist and private property systems, and to ask "whether they are still humanly and christianly right or expedient"³⁰. The more recent letter on *Human Labour* is better: man has primacy, man is central, the person is subject of work and not a mere instrument of production. Labour has priority over capital; "proposals for joint ownership of means of production are legitimate"; Capitalism requires revision, not elimination. Archbishop William Temple too speaks out radically on social issues, questions the purpose of the vast mass of production, but in the end leaves the foundations of capitalism and private ownership intact. He invokes standards of christian justice to modify the existing order rather than to overthrow it³¹.

Once the christian movement became elaborately institutionalised, and turned an ally of the State instead of continuing to be its critic, "sound christian teachings on wealth have

28 E. F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful, Economics as if People mattered*, Harper Colophon, 1975, Blond and Briggs, 1973, p. 266.

29 Ibid., p. 266.

30 Mullin, op. cit., p. 201-204.

31 Ibid., p. 204-205, 206-207.

tended to corrupt themselves, generating the injustices we confront today". Historically, "the established churches have tended to distort or hide their own radical foundations and the more embarrassing consequences of their uncompromised doctrines". That is why the churches are unable "to respond adequately to the demands of our situation"; and most christians conform to the views and values of a nominally or not at all christian society; and social and political non-conformists are looked upon as godless; and the leaders of the churches "have not been effective leaders of church members in their economic life".³² The need now is that "christians should be conspicuous for their odd behaviour" in rejecting theoretically and practically "the prevailing financial ideals". But action for just economic practice presupposes preparation and education in giving and sharing. As Mullin observes,

"People whose conventional practice requires regular, noticeable financial sacrifice, beyond the demands of the State tax systems, whether as a condition for church membership or an expected work of supererogation, are better prepared for justice than their fellows."

But the churches' discipline for giving is inadequate. They should make themselves responsible, in justice and charity,

"to promote programmes of giving that take account of prevailing greed in our society, counter it and offer effective persuasions and methods for their members' routine discipline of giving",

and make sure that the offerings "take routes and reach destinations apart from any church".³³ With such education a vividly christian teaching, applicable to our situation, can emerge, and "christianity can rediscover the force, vitality and relevance to have a revolutionary impact on events", and offer a viable choice beyond capitalism and atheistic communism ("whose embodiments rapidly became ... as unjust and evil as those of capitalism"), and withdrawal from society.³⁴

But to speak meaningfully of alternatives and to work towards a genuinely human economic order, we must be clear in our minds about the prevailing system, its merits no less than its deficiencies. This knowledge is particularly necessary since the

32 Ibid., p. 11, 214-215.

33 Ibid., p. 218.

34 Ibid., p. 215.

system is now being imposed on the economically disadvantaged nations by the governments of rich countries and by powerful international financial institutions, and is welcomed by our own western educated elite whose cultural outlook and economic interests are integrated with those of the wealthy of the West. The elite and their governments accept dictation, open up to transnational corporations, privatize the country, produce for export, lift controls, give preference to tourists over citizens, and leave the burgeoning mass of the wretched of the earth to fend for themselves.

E. Free Market Economy: Capitalism

Capitalism has some important entries on its credit side. The break-down of feudalism's rigid hierarchism and social immobility is in the main the work of capitalism, though it has set up its own social hierarchy and fluid stratification. It has contributed to the rapid development of productive forces, world travel and global communications though these achievements have brought not greater world unity and harmony but deeper divisions and severer conflicts on a larger scale than ever before. The system may take credit for promoting scientific research and ceaseless technical innovations, leading to a marvellous explosion of sophisticated technology that is revolutionalising life, though much of this is relevant, if at all, only to the military and MNCs and not to the masses; and diverts scarce funds and resources from basic human needs like food, housing and health care; is environmentally polluting and wasteful; and destructive of the human. It produces a variety of goods in great quantities in anarchic competition and then seeks to create needs by manipulating minds and human weaknesses while real human needs remain unmet. It has enriched a few nations with the use of brute or subtle violence at the expense of the rest of the world, and enriches a few men in many countries at the people's cost. It is a process of concentration of economic and technological power which necessarily carries and litters boundless killer/war power as well as the power of dirty tricks and destabilisation and of the half-lies of ads and political commercial propaganda. Karl Marx admired the (transitional) achievements of capitalism. It is Marx that Michael Novak quotes as he begins to sing the praises of the system in his *Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*. But Marx was also one of capitalism's

severest critics. The criticism of the system has now grown much wider, deeper, sharper:

1. *The only way?* A key United Nations declaration, prepared for the UN golden jubilee meet (the UN Summit on Social Development) and meant to be signed by all 186 members, spoke of poverty, unemployment and social disintegration as problems of the Third (Two-Thirds) World alone. To these problems the sole solution was the free market model of western economies. All member nations were to embrace this model, undertake structural adjustments and follow the path of globalisation. Indian intelligentsia and NGOs expressed shock at this "outright advocacy of free market economy as the only solution" to our problems. The draft came in for scathing criticism from academicians, voluntary activists and former bureaucrats in a series of seminars held early in January 1995. The document was denounced "as being a threat to the sovereignty of developing nations". The neocolonialist design behind the document and behind the hurry to impose the 'sole' solution was clear (The Pioneer, 15 January 1995). The 'sole solution' dogma is a sample of the monopolistic and totalitarian thinking characteristic of bourgeois capitalism. An *a priori* conviction that the western oligarchy's way is the only way seeks to suppress independent initiatives which do not promise further profits to the already wealthy.

2. *Contempt for the human.* Paul Harrison, journalist, makes a sharp reference to industrial capitalism's "peculiar contempt for and exploitation of human beings and nature"³⁵. That is more than enough of an indictment of the system and powerful motivation to start weeding it out. I think people would agree that "the original goal of all economic activity was to provide human beings with the basic material necessities of life", like food, clothing, shelter and health. There are other needs too of a social and political nature like education, participation, relationships to other human beings and the environment. All this is subverted in capitalism. "The assumption of society organised on the market economy principle is that human needs are unlimited." Then the real dynamics in economic development becomes the entrepreneur's desire to make money, to make more money. Things are not made to meet human beings' real needs but to sell in the market

35 Paul Harrison, *inside the Third World*, Pelican, 1979, 1981, 1982, 1984, p. 33

after manipulating the public and creating artificial needs. That is subtle, but deep-cutting contempt for the human.³⁶ It will be instructive to compare this with Marx's position that 'man's real need is for other man' and that the economy is but a humanising relationship between person, human groups and the earth'. Duchrow finds Max Weber admitting that

"the capitalist version of the market leaves the concrete human being out of account ... The human being on which the capitalist market and its theoretical apologies are based is an abstraction. The factors which motivate this human being are reduced to "the striving for wealth" (J. S. Mill), or the "acquisitive instinct" ... Absolutize this isolated aspect and treat it as the only or the decisive aspect of human economic activity, and it becomes a dangerous ideological distortion of reality." The concept is taken — mistaken — for the whole of economic reality ... The market is no longer treated as a place of exchange where basic human needs are met in accord with rules of comparable benefit, but is turned into a hunting field where all are hunters "serving" the impersonal "material" purpose of "striving for wealth".³⁷

The distortion begins where profit replaces human beings; and what the capitalist wants (profit), replaces human needs.

3. *Made to consume.* Another aspect of contempt for humans consists in reducing them in the main to consumers. In sane human economics, "the ownership and the consumption of goods is a means to an end". But as E. F. Schumacher points out,

"modern economics considers consumption to be the sole end and purpose of all economic activity, taking the factors of production ... as the means."³⁸

The modern economist is used

"to measuring the 'standard of living' by the amount of annual consumption, assuming all the time that a man who consumes more is 'better off' than a man who consumes less. A Buddhist economist would consider this approach excessively irrational: since consumption is merely a means to human well-being, the aim should be to obtain the maximum of well-being with the minimum of consumption."³⁹

For the capitalist market economy to be human is to consume; to be more human is to consume more!

4. *Schools versus profits.* Walter Rodney, author of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972) tells us how in saving to build schools and educate their children, "Africans were establishing an order of priorities different from that of the colonialists".

36 Cf. I / Schoene (1985) quoted in Ulrich Duchrow, *Global Economy, A Confessional Issue for the Churches?* WCC, Geneva, 1987/Munich 1986, p. 153.

37 Duchrow, op. cit., p. 151. 38 Schumacher, op. cit., p. 55. 39 Ibid., p. 45

"In Kenya (for instance) white settlers made it clear that as far as they were concerned, an uneducated African was better than an educated one, and that one with the rudiments of education was at least preferable to one with more than a few years of schooling."

In support of this Rodney quotes from the Beecher report on education in Kenya (1949), which said that "illiterates with the right attitude to manual employment are preferable to products of the schools..."⁴⁰

5. *Free movement to goods, not to people.* Yet another way in which capitalism degrades the human. Writes Arjun Makhijani, president of the Institute for Energy and Environment Research near Washington:

"The European governments are trying to prevent people from the Third World from settling on their continent. The cheap labor, markets, land and resources of the Third World are welcome, and extracted by force if necessary. Trade is imposed by international rules of "free trade" and free capital movement and IMF "conditionalities". But the people are not free to move."

Passports and visas restrict mobility, today, though not so long ago a great many Europeans entered the American continent without passports: illegal immigrants! USA-Mexican borders are heavily policed, though not US-Canada borders. Pass-laws used to exist in South Africa. Today borders are being eliminated in capitalist Europe, but xenophobia grows in proportion. People, poor people in particular, are not welcome, profit is.

That is capitalism, and much more in that line. One could mention capitalist conquests and colonial oppression, its violence and wars ancient and modern, the way it underdeveloped much of the world by large scale massacres and genocidal policies, by destruction of great human cultures and advanced industrial economies, by slave trade and slave labor, by large scale loot of captive continents. One could describe its amoral character, the frauds and murders through which capital was accumulated, the philosophy of social darwinism elaborated to justify the plunders and the murders. One could analyse the destructive and imperialist policies of the IMF, the WB and the WTO and of the MNCs and banks and governments of which they are the tools. But one could think of alternative ways of organising the economy in human ways to serve human needs and authentic human possibilities in a just, gentle and equal social order.

Samuel Rayan

40 Walter Rodney, *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*, Dar es Salaam, 1974, p. 293-294, 292.

Discussion forum

Can Christianity fit into the Hindu-framework?

It is a matter of some satisfaction that Dr. Raimon Panikkar has set the record straight and clearly stated: "The incarnated Logos is Jesus of Nazareth ... If there were 'two' incarnations, in the Christian sense, the two would be identical and also coincide"¹. We have, however, to point out that it is irrelevant that a Hindu or anybody else may discover in the phenomenon of the divine Mystery "aspects and dimensions of that Mystery for which the Christian has no other name than Christ". This would in no way affect the unique and definitive character of Jesus of Nazareth, who marks the entry of the Son of God into human history as its lord and leader. When one man, Jesus of Nazareth, was able to tell Thomas: "I am the way, and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father, but by me" (Jn 14:6) human history entered a definitive course of return to the Creator. This is not an isolated statement in the New Testament, since there are good many others that mean that the Incarnation of the Son of God is a definitive event in the history of humanity which radically changed it into salvation history. Hence the statement of some theologians like Langton Gilkey and John Cobb jr. that Jesus of Nazareth as incarnation of the Logos is relevant only for Christians and that others could have equally relevant and valid manifestations of the Logos is irreconcilable with the Christian Gospel.

Is not the root of the problem Panikkar's original project to make Christianity and Hinduism meet "precisely in the framework proposed by Hinduism"² and fit the Christian vision of salvation into the Hindu perspective? The problem still remains since Panikkar states as his "belief and personal experience" that "the Christian Incarnation is the Christian language expressing of the divine mystery"³. As Panikkar reports a Hindu critic to have told him, he is actually seeing Christianity through Hindu glasses, and it surely does not do justice to Christianity. In the Hindu perspective the ideal of salvation is *atmasaksatkara* or *paravidya*, an intuitive realization of *Atman* as one's own authentic self. Since this is very difficult for most people, the ordinary religious experience is only *aparavidya*, knowledge of *Brahman* through the

1 "Neither Christomonism nor Christodualism", *Jeevadhara*, July 1994, pp. 336-338.

2 Raimundo Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, rev. ed. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981, p. 48.

3 *Jeevadhara*, l. c. p. 338.

phenomenal world, such as from Scripture, instruction by a teacher, ritual, and meditation, namely knowledge through the saguna aspect of Brahman, though in reality nirguna brahman and saguna brahman are identical. Since the humanity of Christ, through which the divinity is experienced is finite and created any divine experience through Christ can never exceed the level of aparavidya. Hence Christianity can at best be only a preparation for the authentic Hindu experience. The Hindu view is a view from above, from the ideal of the intuitive realization of Brahman as one's own self. After all, Atman is the absolutization of consciousness into the infinite, immutable consciousness, the one-alone-without-a-second.

The Christian religious perspective, on the other hand, is a view from below. It starts from the simple, human, father-son and lover-beloved relationship, abstracts it from all limitations and imperfections and projects it to understand God, the original source and ultimate meaning of human life. It is open to all human beings, the poor, the hungry, the weeping and the persecuted. Only through the Son of God who emptied himself and took the form of a slave can human beings learn how to call God, Father (Phil 2: 6-8). It is the Spirit of the Son who gives the courage to address God as Abba! (Rom 8: 15). The Hindu Logos or Nadabrahma remains above time and can never be really in time. Hence Christianity can never be fitted as Panikkar suggests, into the "the framework proposed by Hinduism". Only the Son really incarnate in time can be a historical person and be really the Leader of human history.

The Christian problematic is radically different from that of Hinduism. Hinduism is asking how finite beings can find the ultimate meaning of their really unreal entities in the realization of the one really Real, while Christianity is asking how finite human beings can find their ultimate reality and meaning in communion with the tripersonal Godhead. The square peg of the Christian problematic can never fit into the round hole of Hinduism! The scope of interreligious dialogue is not to fuse different religions but to make them present to each other in their distinct identities! Hence when someone solemnly declares the traditional Christian missionary paradigm of the proclamation of the Gospel "to a large extent obsolete" because "the vast majority of the interviewers [in the national mission survey] believe that other religions are legitimate ways of salvation to their adherents"⁴ he is speaking with only the Hindu problematic in view. In view of the ultimate goal of realizing God as the one real Self, all religions are equally inadequate and yet partially meaningful as a preparation for the final paravidya! But then he misses the point of the Gospel. This only shows

how wide an impact the confusion created by Panikkar's wrong project is having on Christian thinking in India today.

Similarly those who neatly distinguish religious vision into ecclesio-centric, Christo-centric and theo-centric sections and want "to restore the theocentric focus to Western Christianity, which tends to stop short at Jesus"⁵ are unwittingly promoting the same Hindu framework. They arbitrarily assume that the ideal experience of God is the Hindu vision of the One-alone-without-a-second, that Jesus is only the way not the goal and that the Church is only a symbol and servant of the Kingdom. However, in justice to Hindu thought one has to say that the analytical method used by such theologians is strictly Western, based on the Greek absolutization of the concept of 'being' into 'Supreme Being', and not at all the Indian integral vision which affirms the real identity of the nirguna brahman and saguna brahman. The only God, however, whom the Christians know is the triune Father, Son and Holy Spirit: "For us there is one God the Father from whom are all things ... and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom are all things" (1 Cor 8: 6) and the only way to the Father is the Son (Lk 10: 22). Hence in the Christian perspective one cannot be truly theocentric except through Christocentrism. Nobody has seen God; the Son who is in the bosom of the Father reveals him to us. Similarly, the way we know anything for sure about Jesus Christ is through the movement he started, the Church. So one cannot be Christo-centric except by being ecclesio centric. Church is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all (Eph 1: 23). That the Church as a social reality sometimes tends to absolutize itself and has used even evangelization as a tool of colonialism, is a political problem, not a really religious problem.

The attempt to "correct" the Christocentric commission in Mt 28: 16-20 with Mt 5: 16⁶, looks rather artificial. Scriptural scholars generally recognize that the symbolism of the enthronement of the Risen Christ in Mt 28: 16-20 only emphasizes the central theme of the whole New Testament that in Jesus of Nazareth raised from the dead there is a new order of salvation for the whole world. Jesus Christ "was designated the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead" (Rom 1: 4). The substance of the Apostolic kerygma was that "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4: 12). One has to do violence to a great number of Biblical statements to argue out a theocentric sense of the mission command as merely "leading people to give glory to God". Actually even Mt 5: 16 asks to "give glory to your Father who is in heaven".

John B. Chethimattam

5 George M. Soares-Prabhu, "The Church as Mission, A Reflection on Mt 5: 13-16, *Jeevadhara*, I, c. pp. 271.

6 *Ibid.*